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ABSTRACT

The book presents the statements of 8 Mexican Americans and 10 Puerto Ricans, aged from 19 to 29, who were interviewed to reveal their degree of acculturation. Questions include attitude, behavior and/or fact-finding items and cover habitat; family background; intactness of family; educational, income, and occupational levels of parents and respondents; primary groups (e.g., family, close friends, neighbors); peer group influence; behavior and/or achievement models; life history; attitudes toward childhood and adolescent self; interpersonal relations; attitudes toward in-group and out-groups, especially social-distance attitudes toward Anglo-Saxon Americans, Blacks, and other Latin groups; value judgement and clashes; ethnic and cultural loyalties; individual and group identity; self-stereotyping; degree of historical consciousness and awareness of discrimination; ego ideals; occupational, social, and personal aspirations; moral codes; "machismo"; concept of sex roles; supernaturalism; religious beliefs; folk culture; myth; magic; "curanderismo"; and spiritualism. Brief introductions to Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans discuss self-referents, historical background of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans on the island, immigration, migrant workers, law enforcement, education, family social values, the Chicano Movement, folk beliefs, forms and aspects of Puerto Rican dependence, characteristics of the island population, migration to the mainland, the agony of acculturation, and cultural life and its organization in the New York Puerto Rican community. (NQA)

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„Anglos Are Weird People For Me“

Interviews with Chicanos and Puerto Ricans
With a Preface and Introductions

Wolfgang Binder

Berlin
1979

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This book is dedicated to Heidi Gregori
and Tino Villanueva

Preface

In the wake of the Afro-American dominated Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, the two minority groups of mainly Hispanic background, the Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, received a certain amount of attention. Since then they have been able to express their points of view through various means and media but have had little effect on the Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States. Even though considerable progress has been achieved in race relations and in the recognition of cultural pluralism in the U.S. since the 1950's, any observer would have to maintain that the American Dream has turned out to be a nightmare for whole sections of the American nation, and that there is still a long way to go in the eradication of racism.

This book is based on the assumption that the USA and its multi-cultural population does not really need a mythic melting pot concept and that it does itself no favor in expecting or forcing a total assimilation of all its members into a uniform national culture.[1] It is also assumed that ethnic and group cultures are not inferior to but rather different from the dominant culture and that they have every right to be respected. Cultural pluralism, a concept that an increasing number of scholars have advocated over the past twenty years seems to be the most appropriate of the ideologies offered in this context. However, if it is limited to a non-committal, abstract, cultural concept, not much will have to be changed for American society. The recognition of cultural pluralism as I understand it has concrete social and economic, as well as political implications.

The purpose of this book is to present, through the statements of Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans, portraits of individuals as members of culturally and ethnically definable if varied groups within a complex, multi-cultural society.

The two groups dealt with show a degree of visibility as ethnic minorities different from that of Blacks, a fact that holds especially true outside geographic concentrations. Their status has therefore been different from that of Afro-Americans. The complexity of their situation is only vaguely suggested by the term "partial minority".[2] Neither Mexican Americans nor Puerto Ricans are assimilated as groups. Neither of the two fall easily into familiar European immigration patterns. Both show great racial diversity; both are, for most Anglos, low prestige groups. The proximity of Mexico and the island of Puerto Rico lead to a constant reinforcement of stereotypes.

The Spanish speaking groups' geographic distribution is roughly as follows: the vast majority of Mexican Americans live in five Southwestern states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. However, states like Illinois and Michigan have a considerable Mexican American population due to the attraction of their big industrial cities.

Eight out of ten Puerto Ricans living on the mainland reside in New York City. The Cuban group, which was not considered in our sample groups, is concentrated in Florida. According to the U.S. Census of 1970, more than ten million Spanish speaking people live in the USA; nearly three-fifth of them are of Mexican origin and about one-sixth are Puerto Ricans, without considering almost three million Puerto Rican islanders.[3]

Hopefully this book will help to correct in a small measure European ignorance or grossly biased information on Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans and be of some help in understanding their culture and problems. It could be useful as background information or source material in cross-cultural and minority studies, socio-psychological research, and areas touching on the history, sociology, literature and psychology of the two groups dealt with.

I was not interested in substituting one cliché for another and thus had no intention of presenting "typical" Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans. I am familiar with Oscar Lewis' books on Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and with the volumes published in recent years by Studs Terkel.[4] However, none of them, I think, influenced this study. My objectives were quite different. The same applies to R. Fernândez Marina's, U. von Eckardt's, and E. Maldonado Sierra's lengthy The Sober Generation (Río Piedras, 1969) that dealt with "Competent Adolescent Coping" in Puerto Rico.

As the medium of oral interview provides direct and spontaneous material, it appeared to be suited best for an inside view. The twenty-three interviews are samples from a total of about one hundred that were collected. The selection was determined by the degree of verbal fluency and of the representative character of attitudes and beliefs. I accepted as interviewee any person identifying as a Mexican American or a Puerto Rican and who was willing to talk. My main target group were persons from nineteen to twenty-nine years of age. The majority of the interviews were recorded in my home after initial contact had been established at other places. A good third of them were made in the U.S. Everything possible was done to create a relaxed atmosphere of mutual frankness and respect. More than half of the respondents had met me several times before I confronted them with my project. This guaranteed a certain amount of control over the validity of their testimonies and was helpful in avoiding the effects of an unaccustomed milieu. My being outside the power structure connected with their lives proved especially useful. All interviewees were informed that the texts would be used in class. I did not try to play an overly dominate interviewer's role nor did a "buddy-buddy" relationship seem appropriate. It would be naive, however, to assume that the interviewer's personality did not influence to some degree questions and answers. Seven Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans served in the U.S. Army at the time the interviews were made - in the year 1975. I was not interested in their Army experience but it plays nonetheless a certain role in the answers to questions pertaining to opinions on the other Latin group or on Blacks. Some respondents had had their first encounters with these other minorities in the Army. Usually life histories were followed up to their joining the Armed Forces and not carried beyond. I kept the interviewees' Christian names only, and if they wished, reduced their home town names to the respective initials.

All interviews presented here were taped with a cassette recorder. Its inbuilt, invisible microphone helped to overcome initial feelings of insecurity - an assumption that proved correct after I compared the result with the interviews that were realized with a reel-to-reel tape recorder and a separate microphone.

I made efforts to avoid the more obvious pitfalls of interview techniques,[5] but, in fact, mistakes in giving certain items will be detected easily as they are not deleted. My main technique could be best described as that of a semi-standardized interview which includes an established set of questions but admits room for non-directive, personalized or follow-up questions. Thus both objective and subjective, as well as "scenic" information was possible.[6] Occasionally I used the funneling or reverse funneling technique, sometimes (mainly because of the time factor) I refrained from applying it. Loaded questions were given intentionally; since the interview was made orally the respondent could react with greater freedom than by writing. I was conscious of the carry-over effect of questions, of the importance of wording, speed and tone. I realize that each interview is incomplete in itself but hope that the texts, if read together, will with their exposed belief systems give an impression of the mentality, the norms of the respondents, and thus lend a certain amount of representativeness to our sample group.[7]

The questions included attitude, behavior and/or fact-finding items and were directed grosso modo at the following, necessarily interdependent areas:

a. Habitat, racial composition

b. Family background, composition of domestic groups, intactness of family, educational, income and occupational levels of parents and respondents.

c. Primary groups (family, close friends, neighbors, etc.), peer group influence, behavior and/or achievement models.

d. Life history, attitude toward childhood and adolescent self.

e. Interpersonal relations, attitudes toward in-group and out-groups, especially social-distance attitudes toward Anglo-Saxon America, Blacks, the other Latin group.

f. Value judgements and value clashes, ethnic and cultural loyalties. individual and group identity, self-stereotyping.

g. Degree of historical consciousness and awareness of discrimination.

h. Ego ideals; occupational, social, personal aspirations.

i. Moral codes, "machismo", concept of sex roles.

j. Supernaturalism: religious beliefs, folk culture, myth, magic, "curanderismo", spiritualism.

The Text

The texts should, among other things, reveal the degree of acculturation of the respective respondent. Language being one of the four principal repositories of culture[8] it is also a remarkable medium for reflecting a person's identity. This holds especially true for colloquial, everyday speech.[9]

The interviews were transcribed as recorded, which assured the maximum amount of completeness and accuracy. A restructuring seemed appropriate only in those instances where the respondents expressed the desire to add something specific to a previous answer. The respondents were not interrupted except in some rare cases where an additional precision or clarification seemed called for. The text is edited in the sense that passages considered irrelevant were omitted. Repetitions were maintained if they marked emotion of confusion. No phonetic transcription or consideration of phonetic variables (such as the incidence of s,t,θ)[10] was intended, but syntax and grammar were maintained unless a phrase would have no meaning without a correction. An attempt was thus made to preserve the self-expressive aspect of language.

No interpretation or analysis of the interviews is given here. I assume that the texts speak for themselves and do not intend to curtail potential classroom discussion.

The language chosen corresponded to the respective respondent's wish. Of the ten Puerto Rican texts, four were recorded in Spanish, of the remaining six three were done in English even though the person's mother tongue was Spanish. Of the thirteen Chicano texts, the one by the Mexican National was done in Spanish, seven others used Spanish partly, following no apparent pattern. In the translation, an attempt was made to maintain the diverse stylistic levels and nuances including syntactical and grammatical peculiarities. The original language(s) of the interview is (are) mentioned briefly in the headings; S for Spanish, E for English.

The sequence of the texts was established with no specific purpose excepting the last interview of each group. They are intended as commentaries by persons who differed from the main group of the respondents.

The Respondents

It was already stated that our sample group were Chicanos and Puerto Ricans aged from nineteen to twenty-nine. The following is a brief statistical summary of our respondents.

Of the twenty-three interviewees, twenty were male. Of the ten Puerto Ricans, five lived on the island on a permanent basis. Three of the mainlanders were first generation American born, none belonged to the second generation, two were newcomers. In the Chicano group, two respondents were immigrants, nine second generation, one belonged to the third generation or had roots that extended further back. One respondent was a Mexican National who was included mainly for his contrastive views on Chicanos. One Puerto Rican text, by Herman B., a man clearly older than the others and who held at the time of the recording a responsible position, furnishes a somber, although informative commentary on the Boston scene. It is particularly of interest because the vast majority of Puerto Ricans in that city are newcomers and thus present a multitude of acute problems. With roughly a third of the Puerto Rican population living on the mainland a consideration of both islanders and mainlanders seemed appropriate.

The respondents' socio-economic level could be situated with four exceptions between lower-middle working class and the poor. The remaining four must be attributed at least to upper-middle class.

Of the Chicano group, eight came from Texas; five from small towns, three from large towns, two were from large Californian towns, two from small towns in New Mexico. All Puerto Rican islanders had lived in the San Juan area. Three of the mainlanders had New York City as a home, are so-called "Nuyoricans", and of the remaining two, one lived in Boston, Massachusetts.

Five of the Chicanos had a complete high school education, two had not completed high school. Five had completed college educations and were headed for an additional academic degree. Two had some college background. Five Puerto Ricans had finished high school, one was a drop-out, two held a college degree and two had experienced some college instruction.

Of the thirteen Chicanos, eleven professed to be Catholic,[11] two belonged to a Protestant denomination. The figures for the Puerto Ricans showed seven Catholics and three Protestants. These figures do not give any information about active or passive responses toward folk religion, "curanderismo" or spiritualism. Eleven Chicanos would not reject "curanderismo" categorically; five Puerto Ricans would. Two of the group were, however, very much influenced by spiritualism.

Accounts of and reactions to Mexico or Puerto Rico are of relevance since these countries could be considered the respective spiritual and cultural mother countries of Chicanos and Puerto Rican mainlanders. The degree of closeness to or distance from these two countries serves as one of the possible indications of the individual's degree of acculturation or assimilation into mainstream American society. Three of the six Puerto Rican islanders had visited the U.S., four out of five mainlanders had been to Puerto Rico. Eleven out of twelve Chicanos had traveled to Mexico, be it only briefly, and had been in the border area. The Mexican National had visited the U.S. several times.

Notes and References to Preface

[1] For the rather broad categories "national origin", "religion", "race", and "nationality" that can be applied to any American and to which may be added the criteria "social class", "rural - urban residence" and "regional residence", see Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins. (New York, c1964, repr. 1975) 26ff., 47ff.

[2] John R. Howard, ed., Awakening Minorities. (No place, c1970) 4, 8f.

[3] See Henry M. Ramirez, "America's Spanish Speaking. A Profile", U.S. Dept. of Labor. Manpower Division. Manpower, IV, Sept. 1972, 31-5.

[4] For O. Lewis' famous if controversial concept of the "culture of poverty" that he had already stated in his Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty see especially the "Introduction" to his La Vida. A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty - San Juan and New York. (New York, c1966), particularly XLII-LII. For a partially undifferentiated attack on Lewis' theory see Chapter Three in Charles A. Valentine, Culture and Poverty. Critique and Counter-Proposals. (Chicago-London, c1968). The Revista de Ciencias Sociales, XI, no. 2, junio 1967, 207-74, contains six articles, mainly by Puerto Rican scholars, dealing with Lewis' book, the best and most varied commentaries so far. Studs Terkel, Working. People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do. (New York, c1974), and by the same author, Division Street. (New York, c1967).

[5] See several informative articles in René König, Hg., Das Interview. Formen, Technik, Auswertung. (Prakt. Sozialforschung, Bd.I, Köln, ^{9}1974), especially those by König himself (13-33), by E.E. and N. Maccoby (37-85), by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia U. (143-60), and by D. Katz (319-31).

[6] See Hermann Argelander, Das Erstinterview in der Psychotherapie. (Darmstadt, 1970).

[7] For a brief list of the task of "Kulturdeutung" see Paul Lorenzen/Oswald Schwemmer, Konstruktive Logik, Ethik und Wissenschaftstheorie. (Mannheim - Wien - Zürich, ^{2}1975) 276, 299.

[8] A.L. Kroeber, "Reality Culture and Value Culture", in The Nature of Culture. (Chicago, 1952) 164-6.

[9] See S. Strauss, Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity. (Glencoe, Ill., 1959) quoted in L. Krappmann, Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität. (Stuttgart, 1973) 38, 45. For the different languages of emotion see Max Pagès, Das affektive Leben der Gruppen. Eine Theorie der menschlichen Beziehungen. (Stuttgart, 1974) 274-6.

[10] See the excellent study by Walt Wolfram, Sociolinguistic Aspects of Assimilation. Puerto Rican English in New York City. (Arlington, Va., 1974).

[11] I am aware of the distinctions that have to be made between formal, nominal, cultural and folk Catholicism. See A. Spitzer, "Religious Structure in Mexico", ALPHA KAPPA DELTAN, XXX, 1960, 54-8, and J. Lafay's study Quetzalcóatl et Guadelupe. La formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique. (Paris, 1974).

I. Introduction

A. Mexican Americans (Chicanos)

Mexican Americans (Chicanos), the second largest minority group in the USA, their culture, their history, their name even is hardly known to a wider German public. Perhaps the news of César Châvez, of his courageous fight for the migrants workers' rights and the strike of grape pickers in Delano, California in the fall of 1965, has reached a sizable public in Europe.

1. The Question of the Self-Referent

Self-referents have always been of considerable importance to ethnic minority groups in their efforts to give expression to collective or individual self-perception. The respective historical, social, and political context determines the speaker's choice. It is of some significance that a single term for Mexican Americans is clearly absent.[1]

The long-time use of "American of Spanish surname", "American of Hispanic descent" or "the Spanish speaking" if used as self-referents smack today of genteelism. These terms are preferred by assimilated middle-class American citizens of Mexican origin. Frequently the so-called "old" families with aristocratic claims, *e.g.* the "manitos" of New Mexico who can point to land grants by the Spanish crown, use the terms as given above. They as a rule prefer "Spanish" to "Mexican" which for them, as for most Anglos, involves both a class and a racial differentiation.[2]

Since the 1960's the terms "Mexican American" and "Chicano" are being employed on a large scale. The majority of the politically engaged youth in the Southwest prefers to identify as "Chicanos". This self-referent appeared first in a "corrido", a ballad, sung and printed in New Mexico in 1931 by Margarito A. Roybal and then in Mario Suarez' sketch "El Hijo" in the 1947 summer issue of Arizona Quarterly and stood for an abbreviation of "Mexicano". The term was revived especially after the Delano strike. Philip P. Ortego gives two possible etymologies: (a) a Náhuatl Indian transcript of "Mexicano" and (b) a contraction of "chico" ("boy" or "small") with the suffix "-ano" - "one who behaves like a boy". A third possibility is evoked by Edward Simmen, i.e. the contraction of "Chi(huahua)" and "(Mexi)cano".

The term "Chicano" has a distinct connotation of racial (mestizo) and cultural pride and involves a positive self-perception as a member of the Mexican-Indian tradition. It carries also a politically assertive meaning and does by no means exclude the so-called "lower class" or "barrio" (ghetto) people.[3]

The older generation, especially in Texas, prefers to call itself "Mexican". Other labels exist, like "Tejano" and "pocho" (which also refers to Chicano language). Among the terms which seem to be more meaningful in Spanish are "La Raza" ("the people"), "La Causa" or "La Gente" (again "the people"), and "carnal" ("brother"); all of them are self-assertive with unifying overtones that stress a common heritage, a common struggle, togetherness.

Often so-called ethnophaulisms go hand in hand with self-referents. These are derogatory names denoting the undesirable out-group. Anglo Americans may thus be called "gringo", "gabacho", "bolillo" or "extranjero" ("foreigner") by Mexican Americans.[4]

2. Some Remarks on History

One of the unique points in Mexican American history is that this group "became a minority not by immigrating or being brought to this country as a subordinate people but by being conquered".[5]

The conflict between North American expansionism in what is today the Southwest and Mexicans became clearly visible in the 1830's with the Texan revolt and independence in 1836 as a first climax. It culminated in the Mexican-American War of 1846 to 1848, was concluded in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of February 2nd, 1848 and in the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. Mexico had to cede Texas and was forced to sell the territories Arizona, California, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and part of Colorado for the sum of 15 million Dollars. Some of the agreements reached in the treaty are still not fulfilled and are part of legal and political controversies.[6] Some of the justifications given for the westward movement and the enormous land-grab by the American government and the settlers (i.e. their doctrine of a "Manifest Destiny" with clear overtones of racism and the waverings between annexation, greed and racial prejudice) are illuminating as they mirror attitudes that have shaped the relationship between Anglos and Mexicans.[7]

The importance of the period from 1849, the end of the Mexican-American War, to the beginning of mass immigration from Mexico, around 1900, is regretfully lacking both in the consciousness of Chicanos and in scholarship. In fact, perhaps with the exception of New Mexico, hardly any of the states or territories in which Mexican Americans played a role has been given adequate treatment in US history books.[8]

The reasons for Anglo domination, for the decline of the old Mexican families and the influx of poor Mexican laborers were numerous and differed for each of the border states.

In Texas, where roughly eighty per cent of the Mexicans lived in the lower Rio Grande valley, large cattle and sheep ranches as well as cotton plantations called for a labor force. "By 1900 the Mexican laborer in both rural and urban Texas had become defined as an inferior person and as a member of a distinctive race entitled to neither political, educational, nor social equality. Remnants of Mexican equality survived only to a limited extent in some of the commercial towns of the Rio Grande valley where Mexicans remained in the majority".[9]

The Mexicans of New Mexico lost their traditional activities, mainly farming, through a steady division of their lands, largely due to the increasing influx of American settlers who were lured into the country by prospective mining and ranching. "The new railroads allowed dozens of isolated company towns to exploit the considerable mineral resources of New Mexico with Mexican labor."[10] Discrimination and isolation reached New Mexico slower than other border states, but seemed established by 1900.

Arizona followed the Texas "pattern of transition to wage labor" very early. By the 1880's Indian resistance was broken and largescale mining interests (especially in copper) entailed a remarkable import of cheap Mexican labor. "From the beginning there was rigid separation by occupation, which meant segregation of the Mexicans from the Anglos..."[11] The remoteness of most mining towns facilitated a ruthless treatment of the laborers.

The history of Mexicans in California between the 1840s and the turn of the century was largely determined by its marginal location to the mother country, by the gold rush and the ensuing mass of settlers from the American Midwest and from Latin America. The U.S. military occupation of 1846 was welcomed by most Californios. They lost most of their power as large numbers of squatters occupied land. The change was slower in southern California for the wealthy Mexican land owners as the influx of settlers was slow until the 1860's. By the end of that decade, however, the flood of 1862 and two consecutive years of drought as well as the accessibility of the province by the railroad and the following land boom had turned the Mexicans into a minority and drastically reduced their economic and political influence. The fact should be stressed that "socially the long-settled charter-members had become Mexicans indistinguishable from the new immigrants from Mexico. ... by now all Mexicans, whatever their isolation from other Mexican communities, had in common a heritage of racial conflict".[12]

From 1900 to the Great Depression (1929) cheap Mexican labor continued to be in great demand for the large irrigated farms, for work in the cotton fields and at the railroads.[13] Mexican labor camp shanty towns appeared both in the country and in the cities, including the automobile cities of the midwest. Especially Texas served as recruiting area for cheap labor, despite political and military troubles in Mexico, despite Pancho Villa's raids into the border states and the American invasion of Mexico City in 1916, and despite numerous labor conflicts in the U.S.

The period between 1900 and 1930 also witnessed an at first unnoticed urbanization of migrant workers - which meant that Mexicans intended to stay in the U.S. Since the 1930's the recognition of this fact helped to provoke acts of violent discrimination culminating in the Los Angeles "zoot riots" and the "pachuco" groups of the early 1940's.[14]

Political participation of Mexican Americans was delayed by the Protestant white majority and major business interests for a long time. A major step towards a Chicano involvement in politics was taken when the poll tax was abolished in 1966. The marginal position of Mexicans in the U.S. and their hesitance to give up their loyalty towards their mother country finds expression also in the low percentage of eligible Mexicans who become naturalized American citizens.[15]

3. Immigration. Migrant Workers

Mexican immigration patterns were never regulated by any quota system, and are of a complex nature. The literature dealing with the different waves of immigrants, their motivations, sociological structure, etc., is still rather scant.[16] It is necessary to keep in mind some basic assumptions that have been of influence upon Anglo-American-Mexican relations. The Mexican border has been both fairly close and fairly open until the end of 1964. Mexicans could go back and forth with relative facility, legally or illegally. The odeur of illegality clings to the Mexican stereotype in Anglo society. This stereotype of the Mexican immigrant being linked with poverty helped the Anglo to confuse "class values" with "ethnic characteristics".[17] Most Mexican immigrants were unskilled, poor and came from rural areas of central Mexico. Mass immigration set in only after 1910 if the attraction the California gold rush exerted after 1848 is not considered. Immigration reached its peak in 1924 with 87,648 and in 1927 with 66,766 entries respectively.[18]

Two much discussed programs were introduced to regulate illegal entries into the U.S.A. In 1942 the "bracero" ("contract labor") program was initiated, which corresponded to cheap labor demands by agro-business and tried to eliminate the steady flow of illegal "wetbacks" ("mojados").[19] It was a remarkable failure in its attempt to restrict immigration and was finally stopped in 1964. New controls eliminating a special handling of the border and of Mexican Nationals were voted by Congress to become effective in 1968.

The second program still has traumatic aspects for Chicano communities. "Operation Wetback" was run by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in June of 1954 and reached the border states as well as large midwestern cities. Its goal consisted in the apprehension of illegal Mexican immigrants and their shipment back to Mexico.[20] This repatriation was immensely successful: Within five years 3,8 million Mexicans were deported, not even 64,000 of them in formal proceedings.

4. Law Enforcement

Mexican American experience in the U.S. has been shaped to a considerable degree by disagreeable and often enough discriminatory contacts with law enforcement agencies. The elite formation of the Texas Rangers ("los rinches") which goes back to 1835, the Border Patrol of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ("la Migra") and finally the individual local policemen have created what is termed a "culture of suspicion" among Mexican Americans.[21]

5. Some Figures

In 1970 the number of Mexican Americans in the U.S. depassed five million which accounts for 12 per cent of the total population of the five southwestern states they are concentrated in.[22] However, numbers given vary between five and over 12 million people; no totally reliable data seem to be available. Texas and California hold the majority of Mexican Americans, and within these two states the heaviest concentrations are in the Los Angeles area and El Paso, Bexar and Hidalgo counties in Texas. Of those only Hidalgo county is clearly agricultural. Mexican Americans also live in greater numbers in urban centers like Corpus Christi, Houston (Texas), San Diego and San Francisco (California), Phoenix and Albuquerque (Arizona) as well as Chicago (Illinois), Detroit (Michigan) and Kansas City (Kansas/Missouri).[23]

In "1960 85 per cent of Mexican Americans were born in the United States and this percentage has probably increased now by ten units". The "third generation formed 55 per cent of the 1960 total, the second generation formed 30 per cent, and the first generation or foreignborn formed 15 per cent. Proportions vary greatly, however, from area to area".[24] Numerically the Mexican American family size surpasses both Anglo and nonwhites in the Southwest excepting the American Indian.

"The median age of the entire Mexican population, 19,6 in 1960, was a full 10 years lower than that of Anglos and 4 years lower than that of nonwhites."[25]

Whereas in 1960 "about 35 per cent of the Spanish-surname families fell below the 'poverty line' of $ 3,000 annual income, although they were less than 10 per cent of all families in the Southwest",[26] ten years later the figure had sunk to a still alarming 29 per cent of Mexican American families being below poverty level. "About 70 per cent of Mexicans are in unskilled and low paid ... jobs."[27]

6. Education

One of the most evident handicaps for Mexican Americans is their overall poor educational accomplishment. It is in part one of the strange fruits of residential and/or (intra-) school segregation. In 1970 only one out of four Mexican Americans over twenty-five had finished high school, only four per cent had attended at least one year of college.[28] Figures for 1960 showed that "only Indians showed still lower attainment .... Taking the Anglo attainment for persons 14 years and older in the Southwest as a norm, the gap was 3.9 school years (or 32 per cent) for people of Mexican descent, and 2.3 years (or 19 per cent), for nonwhites as a whole."[29]

Despite considerable improvement in recent years it seems clear that functional illiteracy (i.e. no schooling or schooling up to four years) is still much higher than that of Anglos. In the mid-sixties functional illiteracy among Mexican Americans was "seven times that of the Anglo population and nearly twice that of nonwhites."[30]

The pedagogical difficulties raised by children coming from other than mainstream cultures have not been resolved. In the worst cases Chicano children have been treated as mentally retarded. Many have been forced to compete scholastically against white, middle class children, and in an insensitive attempt at Americanization, forced to forsake their language and cultural background. Equally debatable, if less brutal, is the practise of separate grading, whereby a Chicano can leave high school totally unprepared for life both in the Chicano and the Anglo world.[31]

As a rule, fault was found with the students and their parents instead of the IQ testing methods and the school system. One of the repeatedly voiced grievances is the Anglo-oriented curriculum and the lack of Mexican American teachers and counselors. According to A.B. Rendon, there were 130,450 Mexican American students in the 1968-69 school year in East Los Angeles. However, only 2.8 per cent of teachers, counselors and supervisory personnel were Mexican American or of Spanish surname.[32] But it is another matter of whether or not a sufficient number of Mexican Americans were at this point qualified to hold these positions.

The Bilingual Education Act of December 1967 proved ineffective for most schools in the Southwest where English remained the only language of instruction. The stereotyped notion that the Mexican American adolescent is present oriented, passive and has little if any aspiration is difficult to overcome. The danger of heightened anger and bitterness is evident when high aspirations are not met with available "channels" "through which to implement them".[33]

One of the problems of the Mexican American who has achieved a middle class position consists of choosing affiliations to affirm his identity. He is to a considerable degree exposed to Anglo values functioning as operative norms, and unless he becomes completely "agringado", practically non-Spanish speaking in his assimilation, he finds it difficult to maintain his identification with many values of "barrio" life or of a rural background. Thus he might find himself drifting between two or more cultures and belonging to none. With the emergence of the Chicano movement in the late 1960's, and its emphasis on cultural, racial and political self-awareness, many young educated Mexican Americans started to re-define their identity and to search for their roots.[34]

7. Some Social Values. The Family

Again it should be stressed that in a hybrid culture as varied and changing as the Mexican American, it is risky to make any definitive statement. Doubtless the family is still an important factor in Mexican American life, but in the last ten years a debilitation of the multi-generational family and a tendency toward disintegration of parental authority is apparent.

Family and sex roles were usually assumed according to traditional concepts whereby a patriarchical male dominated a sheltered woman whose virginity before marriage was considered desirable. This proved particularly true for the rural Mexican American family. Today, however, both the nuclear and the traditional extended family exist side by side since the rural isolation in villages has to a large degree ended. The influx of Anglo life styles is noticeable and mobility, social as well as spatial, has increased. The departure from patriarchy appears to be most evident in the contemporary, urban Mexican American family where women are taking jobs. However, as a rule, the mother's sister and the "primos hermanos", the first cousins, still play a particular role in family loyalty.

Two terms should be mentioned in this context: the Mexican American "familia" refers to the extended family which includes relatives on both sides. Their function consists in part in sharing family responsibilities and in promoting each other in the outside world. "Compadrazgo", godparentage, is another in-group tie. Godparents are as a rule chosen from friends of the family or from persons in important social positions. They may assume important kinship-like functions. Both the coherence of "compadrazgo" and of the extended family ties are weakening in urban centers. We may, however, assume that in a Mexican American family the traditional sense for "dignidad", pride, for politeness and pleasant manners, is stressed.[35]

In this context of in-group relations the much used term "machismo" comes in, a term which has no exact counterpart in translation. "It connotes virility, pride, and a self-concept of personal worth in one's own eyes as well as those of his peers ... for some it means physical violence, the necessity to defend all slights to one's 'honor'...; for the other men it may mean the sexual conquest of many women, and especially being 'irresistable' to women."[36]

8. The Chicano Movement. Chicanismo

Mexican American political organization before the 1960's was weak and scarcely effective. In the 1920's several groups, usually middle-class oriented, existed and finally merged in 1929 into the "League of United Latin-American Citizens" (LULAG), which presented itself as a fairly paternalistic organization of loyal American citizens in an effort to soothe Anglo apprehensions. Since World War II politization of the Mexican American population has increased and LULAC has become more militant. In the 1950's the "Community Service Organization" (SCO) became the dominating political force of Mexican Americans who were concerned with concrete social and economic problems of the masses.

Of importance for the voter registration drives, especially in Texas, was the "G.I.Forum". It was founded in 1948 by Dr. Hector García and owes its existence in part to a *cause célèbre*: the refusal of a funeral home in Three Rivers, Texas, to bury a Mexican American veteran. In 1958 the California based "Mexican American Political Association" (MAPA) and the Texan "Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations"(PASSO) were founded, mainly with the aim of having Mexican Americans voted into political offices.

Later militant youth movements included "El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán" (MECHA, 1969) and "Mexican American Youth Organizations" (MAYO), founded in 1967 by the controversial José Angel Gutiérrez in San Antonio, Texas.

The Chicano movement, according to one theory, "grew out of conferences held at Loyola University in Los Angeles in the summer of 1966."[37] The movement and its ideologies are extremely heterogeneous. It includes, for instance, quite militant leaders like Reies López Tijerina (New Mexico), and Rodolfo González (Colorado), the better known, saintlike

César Chávez (California), and a large number of student groups who seem to be especially active in the state of California.[38]

A much publicized militant Chicano group, the "Brown Berets", who were organized in Los Angeles in 1967, influenced the Chicano movement as a whole in the sense that the physically aggressive "Berets" showed that Anglo violence could be exposed as such by an equally aggressive Chicano stance. The para-military group was composed mainly of high school drop-outs, their base was the "barrio", but at the same time there were contacts with the college student population where their radical philosophy of liberation did have some impact. Some of their attempts at establishing community services, like a free clinic in East Los Angeles opening on May 30, 1969, were modelled upon "Black Panther Poverty Agency" efforts. The group lost power by 1972 because of massive police interference and a lack of ideological consistency, that, had it been resolved, could have made the "Berets" into a force of positive action rather than reaction.[39] It is, however, still at work as a symbol for "the Chicano's search for liberation".[40]

Some of the movements' essential concerns center around a rejection of what is seen as internal U.S. colonialism and working toward an economic control of the Chicano community by Chicanos. An attitude of cultural assertiveness includes an acceptance of the long denied or willfully ignored Indian heritage. The emphasis on Indian heritage, the indigenous past, and the revival of ties with Latin America form a strong element in the formation of Chicano thought. A.B. Rendon sees traditional Náhuatl beliefs and a "cosmic sense of spirit" vaguely reminiscent of the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos' ideas, expressed in his La raza cósmica (1916), as conducive to a "La Raza Unida" concept of the present and future. Rendon lists two essentials for Chicanos: "to reclaim our land, Aztlán; to secure the future for ourselves and our countrymen."[42]

The work by the Mexican poet and philosopher, Octavio Paz, El laberinto de la soledad (México 1959, English translation: New York, 1961) had considerable impact on Chicano thought.[43]

Paz' remarks in Chapter One on the "pachuco" as a symbol of an extreme dual being, living between two cultures, being part of neither, and plagued by a complex of inferiority and a feeling of somber solitude, may have to be reconsidered in more than one point. They are, however, still among the most noteworthy comments on differences in the psyche of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Anglo Americans and their respective sense of existence.[44]

Members of the movememt exert pressure on school boards and universities to create or maintain Chicano Studies programs that reflect the Chicano experience and history in the U.S. and to include sensitive bilingual programs in schools.[45] All these efforts are directed towards a recognition and a legitimization of Chicano culture.

Since 1967 critics have taken note of a "Chicano Renaissance" in literature and the arts.[46] Mexican American writers and historians of former centuries have been so far neglected. The conscious embracing of a mythic past - Aztlán, the northern homeland of the Aztecs, and the rediscovery of the Indian, or mestizo past, is of significance for Chicano consciousness. It is definitely a helpful means in opposing an Anglo world that is often encountered as destructive, sterile, materialistic, grotesque and alienating. Spanish, Chicano dialects (caló), and "pochismos" are purposely and skillfully used in literature as expressions of affirmative self-views.[47] The mixture of American English and Chicano Spanish in one and the same text has created a unique form of binary phenomena. Magazines like El Grito (1968) and its successor since winter 1976, Grito del Sol (both Berkeley, Cal.), Con Safos (Los Angeles, 1969), Aztlán (Los Angeles, 1970) and Caracol (San Antonio, Texas, 1974) are devoted to Chicano expression in literature and in the social sciences. One of the major Chicano publishing houses uses the Aztec symbol of the Quinto Sol. Mexican Indian names, myths, allusions to folklore abound in Chicano poetry and prose.[48]

9. Folk Beliefs

Two aspects of a rich folk culture that are mentioned in the interviews should be briefly touched upon. The term "curandero" refers to folk practitioners or healers who treat ailments like "susto" (fright) or "el mal ojo" (the evil eye) with traditional concoctions, medicinal teas, unguents, and also with magic objects, psychology, and prayer. "Curanderismo" can be viewed as a tool of socialization, a potential retreat for Mexican Americans into traditional roles. Prescribed patterns of approaching a "curandero" and of the cure itself have ritual aspects and seem to relieve tensions in the psyche of a people in culture conflict. Probably the most famous "curandero" was the humble Pedrito Jaramillo at Los Olmos in South Texas.[49]

Among the folk tales in the Southwest stories about the Devil and ghosts abound. One of the most frequently encountered figures both north and south of the Rio Grande is the legend of "La Llorona", the weeping woman in white who killed her children in a fit of fury and despair, because she was deserted by her husband. Ever since, she is said to haunt the earth as a malevolent apparition. She may be found as a figure in a legend that knows many variations,[51] but also as any image of supernatural encounter and terror. According to Luis González Obregón, the wailing woman was first heard in Mexico City in the year 1550.[52]

Notes and References to Introduction (Chicanos)

[1] See Ellwyn R. Stoddard, *Mexican Americans*. (Ethnic Groups in Comparative Perspective) (New York, c1973) 58.

[2] Stoddard, *op. cit.*, 13, rightly points to the fact that even before the Pueblo revolt in 1680 most "manitos" were, racially speaking, not whites but for the most part mestizos.

[3] Margarito A. Roybal, "Las Vegas", in Anselmo F. Arellano, comp., *Los pobladores nuevo mexicanos y su poesía, 1889-1950*. (Albuquerque, N.M., 1976) 128, Edward Simmen, "Chicano, Origin and Meaning", 53-56, Ysidro Macías, "The Chicano Movement", 137, in Edward Simmen, ed., *Pain and Promise*. (New York, c1972), Philip D. Ortego, "Preface", in his *We Are Chicanos*. An Anthology of Mexican-American Literature. (New York, c1973) XV. The best account is Tino Villanueva, "Sobre El Termino 'Chicano'", *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* no. 336, junio 1978, 1-24.

[4] See Edward Simmen, *op. cit.*, 56.

[5] Joan W. Moore with Alfredo Cuellar, *Mexican Americans*. (Ethnic Groups in American Life Series) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., c1970) 11.

[6] For an account of Chicano history as Anglo colonization see Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America*. The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation. (San Francisco, etc., c1972).

[7] Seymour V. Connor and Odie B. Faulk, *North America Divided.* The Mexican War 1846-1848. (New York, 1971), Odie B. Faulk and Joseph A. Stout Jr., eds., *The Mexican War*. Changing Interpretations. (Chicago, c1973), John D.P. Fuller, *The Movement for the Acquisition of All America, 1846-1848*. (Baltimore, 1936), Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*. (New York, 1963), Glenn W. Price, *Origins of the War With Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue*. (Austin, Texas, London, c1967), Ramón E. Ruiz, ed., *The Mexican War: Was It Manifest Destiny?* (New York, 1963), Albert K. Weinburg, *Manifest Destiny*. (Baltimore, 1935).

[8] Among the better publications see Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands*. (New Haven, Conn., 1921), Howard F. Cline, *The United States and Mexico*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest 1848-1912*. A Territorial History. (New York, ^{2}1970).

[9] Joan W. Moore, *op. cit.*, 14.

[10] *Ibid.*, 16, Nancie Gonzalez, *The Spanish Americans of New Mexico*. A Distinctive Heritage. (Los Angeles, Cal., 1967) 29. For the early history of New Mexico see George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico 1595-1680* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1953) Two vols. Of major interest for the early history of what is termed today the American Southwest are Edward G. Bourne, *Spain in America, 1450-1580*. (New York - London, 1904, repr. New York, 1962), Herbert E. Bolton, *Coronado, Knight of Pueblos and Plains*. (New York, 1949), José Miranda, *España y Nueva España en la época de Felipe II*. (México D. F., 1962), Jaime Vicens Vives, *Historia Social y Económica de España y America*. (Barcelona, 1957-9) Five vols.

[11] Joan W. Moore, *op. cit.*, 16f.

[12] Joan W. Moore, *op. cit.*, 20. See also the excellent study by Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish Speaking Californians, 1846-1890*. (Los Angeles, Cal., 1966).

[13] *Ibid.*, 20-30. Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico*. (Philadelphia, 1949).

[14] In June of 1943 U.S. sailors raided "barrios" to attack Mexican youths several nights in a row after a fight had opposed Mexicans and sailors. The events received nation-wide attention after instances of brutality and police as well as press partiality became known. See George I. Sanchez, "Pachucos in the Making", *Common Ground*, autumn 1943, as quoted in W. Moquin, C. Van Doren, F. Rivera, eds., *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*. (New York, c1971) 409-13. Also Carey McWilliams, *op. cit.*
The term "Pachuco", probably stemming from an identical name for a town in Mexico, denotes members of militant youth gangs, especially in the Los Angeles area. See Octavio Paz' analysis of the "pachuco" in his *Laberinto de la soledad* (México D.F., c1950), Chapter One, and Raúl Béjar Navarro, "Estructura, Violencia, y Cambío Social del Grupo Chicano" in James W. Wilkie, Michael C. Meyer, Edna Monzón de Wilkie, eds. *Contemporary Mexico*. (Papers of the IV. International Congress of Mexican History) (Berkeley, etc., c1976) 564-80.

[15] See Leo Grebler, "The Naturalization of Mexican Immigrants in the United States", *The International Migration Review*, I, no. 4, fall 1966, 17-32.

[16] Ernesto Galarza, Merchants of Labor. The Mexican Bracero Story. (San José Cal., 1964), Manuel Gamio, Mexican Immigration to the United States. (Chicago, 1930), and by the same author, The Mexican Immigrant. His Life Story. (Chicago, 1931), Leo Grebler, Mexican Immigration to the United States: The Record and Its Implications. Advance Report Two. (Los Angeles, U. of Cal., Mexican American Study Project, 1966).

[17] Ellwyn Stoddard, op. cit., 116.

[18] Figures in Leo Grebler, op. cit., 106.

[19] Term referring to illegal crossing of the Rio Grande River into U.S. territory. It has a strong derogatory connotation.

[20] Similar repatriation actions had been taken in the mid-thirties, but on a smaller scale.

[21] See Joan W. Moore, op. cit., 89ff. Lawrence Glick, "The Right to Equal Opportunity", in J. Samora, ed., op. cit., 95-124, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest. (Washington D.C., March 1970), in part reprinted in Livie Isauro Duran and H. Russell Bernard, eds., Introduction to Chicano Studies. A Reader. (New York, c1973) 459-82.

[22] U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, "Spanish-American Population: Nov. 1969". (Series P-20, no. 195, Febr. 20, 1970) 2.

[23] For figures see A.B. Rendon, op. cit., 41.

[24] Joan W. Moore, op. cit., 56.

[25] Ibid., 57.

[26] Ibid., 60.

[27] Henry M. Ramirez, op. cit.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzman, The Mexican-American People. (New York-London, c1970) 143f.

[30] Joan W. Moore, op. cit., 65; her source is Leo Grebler, The Schooling Gap: Signs of Progress. Advanced Report 7. (Los Angeles, U. of California, Mexican American Study Project, 1967). Also useful are Ysidor A. Cabrera, A Study of American and Mexican-American Culture Values and Their Significance in Education. (San Francisco, ^{2}1972), Ralph Poblano, ed., Ghosts in the Barrio. Issues in Bilingual Bicultural Education. (San Rafael, Cal., c1973), Georgie I. Sanchez, "History, Culture, and Education", in Julian Samora, ed., op. cit., 13-23, Southwest Network, ed., Parameters of Institutional Change: Chicano Experiences in Education. (Haywood, Cal., c1974), Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans. Report 6, Mexican American Education Study. A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, February 1974. (Washington D.C., 1974), Nathaniel N. Wagner and Marsha J. Haug, eds., Chicanos. Social and Psychological Perspectives. (Saint Louis, 1971).

[31] Joan W. Moore, op. cit., 76-84, and L. Grebler, J.W. Moore, R.C. Guzman, op. cit., 142-179.

[32] A.B. Rendon, op. cit., 206. See also James S. Coleman, et al., Equality of Educational Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Health, Welfare, and Education. (Washington, D.C., 1960).

[33] Ellwyn R. Stoddard, op. cit., 172.
The educational problems of migrant workers children are expecially dramatic. See Anne Brunton, "The Chicano Migrants", in Livie Isauro Duran and H. Russel Bernard, eds., op. cit., 485-502, Melvin S. Brooks, The Social Problems of Migrant Farm Workers: Effect of Migrant Farm Labor on the Education of Children. (Carbondale, Ill., 1960), Shirley E. Greene, The Education of Migrant Children. (Washington D.C., 1954).

[34] For the ramarkable persistence of Spanish in the U.S., a complex case, see L. Grebler, J.W. Moore and R.C. Guzman, op. cit., 423-43.

[35] For the changes in traditional family structure and the "compadrazgo" system see Fernando Peñalosa, "The changing Me Mexican-American in Southern California", in Edward Simmen, ed., Pain and Promise. The Chicano Today. (New York, etc., c1972) 61-72. Also L. Grebler, J.W. Moore, R.C. Guzman, op. cit., "The Family: Variations in Space and Time", 350-377.

[36] John H. Burma, "A Comparison of the Mexican American Subculture with the Oscar Lewis Culture of Poverty Model", in John D. Burma, ed., Mexican-Americans in the United States: A Reader. (New York, c1970) 17-28.

[37] J.W. Moore, *op. cit.*, 149.

[38] R. López Tijerina, a former Baptist preacher and a figure of charismatic appeal, became known in the 1960's as the stout defender of Spanish land grants in northern New Mexico. The loss of most documents as a result of the destruction of the Santa Fe archives between 1869 and 1871 enabled Anglos to cheat Mexican Americans out of four fifth of their grants by 1900. This happened despite Article Eight of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which had assured the protection of private property. Article Ten, which had guaranteed Mexican property in unequivocal terms was disposed of before ratification by the U.S. Senate. Tijerina, who is the founder of "La Alianza de Mercedes" (1963) and of "Alianza de los Pueblos Libres" (1966), its successor, made headlines when he and 350 of his followers occupied Kit Carson National Forest on October 15, 1966, with his "courthouse raid" at Tierra Amarilla of June 5, 1967 and his attempt to arrest the district attorney. He also consistently advocated alliances with Latin American nations and the so-called Third World in general.
See his autobiography, *Mi Lucha por la Tierra*. (México D.F., 1978), his "Letter from the Santa Fe Jail", Sept. 26, 1969, in *El Grito Del Norte*, repr. in W. Moquin, C. VanDoren, F. Rivera, eds., *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*. (New York, c1971) 484-8, Patricia Bell Blawis, *Tijerina and the Land Grants*. (New York, c1971), Clark Knowlton, "The New Mexican Land War", in E. Simmen, ed., *op. cit.*, 258-70; Norman P. Hering, "Reies López Tijerina: Don Quixote in New Mexico", *ibid.*, 286-96, R. Acuña, *op. cit.*, 237-41, Rees Lloyd and Peter Montagne, "Ford and La Raza: 'They Stole Our Land and Gave Us Powdered Milk'", orig. in *Ramparts Magazine*, Sept. 1970, repr. in L.I. Duran and H.R. Bernard, eds., *op. cit.*, 373-86, Joseph L. Love, "La Raza: Mexican Americans in Rebellion", in J. Burma, ed., *op. cit.*, 459-72, Richard Gardner, *Grito! Reies Tijerina and the New Mexico Land Grant War of 1967*. (New York, etc., c1970), Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Viva la Raza*. The Struggle of the Mexican-American People. (New York c1974) 156-61, 175-81.
Rodolpho "Corky" González represents the aspirations and grievances of many "barrio" people, especially its youth. He runs a "Crusade for Justice" organization with a social and educational center in Denver, and is active in a "La Raza Unida Party" chapter in Colorado. He is also the author of a very influential epic poem, *Yo soy Joaquín* (1967), which is frequently given as the start of modern Chicano literature,

of several dramas, and is the editor of the newspaper *El Gallo*. For his ideas on nationalism see "What Political Road for the Chicano Movement?", originally in *The Militant*, March 30, 1970, partially repr. in W. Moguin, C. Van Doren, F. Rivera, eds., *op. cit.*, 488-93, R. Acuña, *op. cit.*, 241-3, E. Sutherland Martínez and E. Longeaux y Vásquez, *op. cit.*, 229-32, 259-61.
César Chávez, one of the apostles of nonviolent action in our time, the prominent leader of the "United Farm Workers Organizing Committee", gained world wide recognition in his peaceful efforts directed towards unionizing migrant workers and obtaining decent wages for them. The memory of the grape workers' strike of September 1965 at Delano, California, is still vivid. César Chávez, "The Organizer's Tale", *Ramparts Magazine*, V, no. 2, July 1966, repr. in L.I. Duran and H.R. Bernard, eds., *op. cit.*, 545-52, Peter Matthiessen, *Sal Si Puedes*. César Chávez and the New American Revolution. (New York, 1969), Joan London and Henry Anderson, *So Shall Ye Reap*. The Story of César Chávez. (New York, c1970), E. Sutherland Martínez and E. Longueaux y Vásquez, *op. cit.*, 184-99, 208f., 211-21, John Gregory Dunne, *Delano*. (New York, c1971), Ronald B. Taylor, *Chávez and the Farm Workers*. (Boston, 1975).

[39] Rodolfo Acuña, *op. cit.*, 231-3.

[40] Armando B. Rendon, *op. cit.*, 205.

[41] Community and county control is felt as especially urgent and feasible in southern Texas and the San Antonio and Los Angeles areas. "La Raza Unida Party", founded in October 1967 in El Paso, Texas, made considerable progress in cities like Crystal City, Texas. See excerpts from José Angel Gutiérrez' speech of May 4, 1970, "Mexicanos Need to Control Their Own Destinies", repr. in E. Simmen, *op. cit.*, 249-57; "Plan de la Raza Unida Party Preamble", and its eight points in A.B. Rendon, *op. cit.*, 331f.; Antonio Camejo, "A Report From Aztlán: Texas Chicanos Forge Own Political Power", in E. Simmen, *op. cit.*, 240-8; R. Acuña, *op. cit.*, 253-6; A.B. Rendon, *op. cit.*, 265.

[42] Armando B. Rendon, *op. cit.*, 9, 278. See also "The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán", adopted by the Crusade for Justice Youth Conference, Denver, Colorado, March 31, 1968, repr. in A.B. Rendon, *op. cit.*, 336f.

[43] A German edition of O. Paz' work came out as *Das Labyrinth der Einsamkeit*. Translated by C. Heupel. (Olten-Freiburg i.B., c1969).

[44] For a famous study of the "peludo", who represents "machismo" in its most unadulterated form see Samuel Ramos, El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México (Buenos Aires - México D.F., c ^{2}1952), especially Chapter One, "Psicoanálisis del mexicano", 50-61.

[45] See El Plán de Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara, Cal., c1970), Thomas P. Carter, "Mexican Americans: How the Schools Have Failed Them", in Duran and Bernard, op. cit., 447-59; Manuel H. Guerra, "The Mexican-American Child: Problems or Talents?", in E. Simmen ed., op. cit., 199-213; Philip D. Ortego, "Schools for Mexican-Americans: Between Two Cultures", in E. Simmen, ed., op. cit., 224-33; E.R. Stoddard, op. cit., 123-51.

[46] See Philip D. Ortego, "The Chicano Renaissance" in Margaret M. Mangold, ed., La Causa Chicana. The Movement for Justice. (New York, c1972) 42-64.

[47] See the compilation of articles by Eduardo Hernández-Chávez, Andrew D. Cohen and Anthony F. Beltramo, eds., El lenguaje de los Chicanos. Regional and Social Characteristics Used by Mexican Americans. (Arlington, Va., c1975). Also useful are: George Barker, Tucson, Arizona. (Tucson, Ariz., ^{4}1974), Paul D. Brandes and Jeutonne Brewer, Dialect Clash in America: Issues and Answers. (Metuchen, N.J., 1977) 163, 354-413, Gilberto Cerda, Berta Cabaza, Julieta Farias, comp., Vocabulario Español de Texas. (Austin, Texas, ^{3}1974), Gary D. Keller, Richard V. Teschner, Silvia Viera, eds., Bilingualism in the Bicentennial and Beyond. (New York, c1976), Heinz Kloss, The American Bilingual Tradition. (Rowley, Mass., c1977), Paul R. Turner, ed., Bilingualism in the Southwest. (Tucson, Ariz., c1973) 3-142, Max Leopold Wagner, "Ein mexikanisch-amerikanischer Argot: das Pachuco", in Romanistisches Jahrbuch. (Hamburg, 1956) VI, 1953/4, 237-66.

[48] Major voices in contemporary Chicano poetry are Alurista, Abelardo Delgado, Sergio Elizondo, Tomás Rivera, Omar Salinas, Ricardo Sánchez, Gary Soto, Tino Villanueva, Bernice Zamora. Among the prose writers should be mentioned Rodolfo A. Anaya, Ron Arias, Raymond Barrio, Ernesto Galarza, Rolando R. Hinojosa, Miguel Méndez, J.L. Navarro, Estela Portilla Trambley, Richard Vásquez, José Antonio Villarreal. In drama Isidro R. Macias, Carlos Morton, Estela Portillo, Luis Váldez and his Teatro Campesino may be considered representative.
Seven major anthologies of Chicano letters are available (in chronological order): Octavio I. Romano-V. and Herminio Rios C., eds., El Espejo - the Mirror. Selected Chicano Literature. (Berkeley, Cal., 1969, ^{5}1972), Ed Ludwig and James

Santibañez, eds., *The Chicanos*. Mexican American Voices. (Baltimore, Md., c1971), Antonio Castañeda Shular, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Joseph Sommers, eds., *Literatura chicana, texto y contexto*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., c1972, rev. ed. forthcoming), Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner, eds., *Atzlán*. An Anthology of Mexican American Literature. (New York, c1972), Philip D. Ortego, ed., *We Are Chicanos*. An Anthology of Mexican American Literature. (New York, c1973), Octavio I. Romano-V. ed., *Voices*. *Readings from El Grito 1967-1973*. (Berkeley, Cal., 1971, rev. ed., 1973), Carlota Cárdenas de Dwyner, ed., *Chicano Voices*. (Boston, etc., c1975). Two special issues of the following magazines are dedicated exclusively to Chicano Studies, mainly to literature: *Latin American Literary Review*, V, no. 10, spring-summer 1977, and *New Scholar*, VI, 1977.

[49] See Ari Kiew, *Curanderismo*. Mexican-American Folk Psychiatry. (New York - London, c1968), Ruth Dobson, "Don Pedrito Jaramillo. The Curandero of Los Olmos", in Wilson M. Hudson, ed., *The Healer of Los Olmos and Other Mexican Lore*. (Dallas, Texas, 1951) 9ff. Interesting material may be found in Américo Paredes, "Folk Medicine and the Intercultural Jest", in L.I. Duran and H.R. Bernard, eds., *op. cit.*, 261-75, and John G. Bourke, "Popular Medicine, Customs, and Superstitions of the Rio Grande", *The Journal of American Folk Lore*, VII, no. 25, April-June 1894, 119-46.

[50] See, for instance, Elaine K. Miller's amply documented collection *Mexican Folk Narrative from the Los Angeles Area*. (Austin - London, c1973), and William J. Wallrich, "Spanish American Devil Lore in Southern Colorado", *Western Folklore*, IX, no. 1, January 1950, 50-5.

[51] E.K. Miller, *op. cit.*, 106ff., Robert A. Brakat, "Aztec Motifs in 'La Llorona'", *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, XXIX, no. 4, December 1965, 288-96.

[52] Bacil F. Kirtley, "'La Llorona' and Related Themes", *Western Folklore*, XIX, no. 3, July 1960, 155-69.

3. Puerto Ricans

The Puerto Rican group may present some similarities with Chicanos; it would, however, be absurd to make them appear as more or less identical. The two groups seem to show closest affinities in the now somewhat weakened extended family system and in "compadrazgo", godparentage. Their collective history, their racial and cultural background and their migratory patterns to the mainland all make them a unique people. A common Spanish heritage alone is certainly not enough to put them into some sort of "Latin melting pot".

Puerto Ricans are even less known in Europe than Chicanos. A contemporary figure comparable to the Union and Civil Rights leader César Chávez has not caught the attention of the mass media on this continent. The German press mentions periodically and in brief articles spectacular actions by Puerto Rican activists, like the veiling of the eyes of the Statue of Liberty with the Puerto Rican flag or acts of protest by nationalists in the island's capital San Juan.[1] No Puerto Rican theater group has as yet toured Germany - the Chicano "Teatro Campesino" has its audience in most European countries.

Puerto Rico, the smallest of the larger Caribbean islands, is located east of Santo Domingo/Haiti. By air it is 550 ms to Caracas, Venezuela, 1,050 ms to Miami, Florida and 1,600 ms to New York City. With a population of over three millions, it represents one of the most densely populated areas in the world.[2]

1. Puerto Ricans and the Question of the Self-Referent

The vast majority of Puerto Ricans on the island insist on being called "Puerto Ricans" ("puertorriqueños") and nothing else. Very few refer to themselves as "Latins" or

"South Americans", and an even more minute minority would, with an aside on the fact that they are in possession of a U.S. passport, accept the term "Americans".

Those Puerto Ricans who were born on the island and who are newcomers to the mainland usually make a point of maintaining the self-referent "Puerto Ricans". Many of their sons and daughters born and raised in New York City use the contraction "Nuyoricans". This carries a distinctly pejorative connotation on the island and with older members of the New York Puerto Rican community. It is felt that they have abandoned their Hispanic heritage and try to assume the coarser American way of life as it is lived in New York City.

The self-referent used on the mainland, "Puerto Rican Americans", or "Americans of Puerto Rican descent" reflects a middle-class assimilationist attitude and is reminiscent of the use of "Americans of Mexican descent" in certain Mexican American circles. On the whole, however, the issue of the self-referent appears not as relevant to Puerto Ricans as to Mexican Americans, nor is it as sensitive a topic. Hardly any literature exists on the issue.

2. The Island - Some Remarks on History

Puerto Rican history has been to a saddeningly persistent degree a history of dependence. Ever since Columbus claimed the island for the Spanish Crown on his second voyage on November 19, 1493, it has remained in a more or less evident colonial position. Before the then openly imperialistic United States invaded Puerto Rico on May 12, 1898, in the course of the Spanish-American War, the island enjoyed only a brief period of home rule.[3] The Spanish Prime Minister Práxedes Mateo Sagasta and Luis Muñoz Rivera, who represented the "Liberal Party" of Puerto Rico, agreed on an Autonomous Charter for the colony. "The autonomous regime went into effect in February 1898, but lasted only until ... July 25 that same year."[4]

On October 18, 1898, San Juan surrendered officially to the Americans, who had to rephrase their ideology of "Manifest Destiny".[5] With the ratification of the Treaty of Paris on April 11, 1899, Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States.[6] The invasion itself caused little bloodshed. The trauma of the newly re-colonized is based on the quickly defeated hopes of independence, on the ensuing harsh military rule, on the gradual, reluctant concession of modest political rights, on the fight for the survival of a complex Spanish-Caribbean culture. All these phenomena are still part of the burden and challenge of Puerto Rican history.

Among the events which to this day serve as focal points for historically conscious Puerto Ricans and as a cornerstone to a national identity, the "Grito de Lares" occupies a prominent position.[7] When Queen Isabella III was deposed and Spanish military officers proclaimed a Spanish Republic, a rebellion was under way in Puerto Rico. On September 20, 1868, approximately 250 men rallied at a coffee plantation near Lares in the western part of the island, tried in a short-lived effort to overthrow the tough Spanish rule under Governor José María Marchessi and to proclaim the Republic of Puerto Rico. Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827-1898), a Puerto Rican exile and an advocate of a confederation of Antillan states, remains the most revered and influential name in this context, "el padre de la patria", and a symbol of Puerto Rican aspirations towards political and cultural independence.[8]

Some Important Dates in the Relations Between the U.S. and Puerto Rico[9]

March 2, 1917: With the Jones Act and a new Organic Charter American citizenship was given to Puerto Ricans. U.S. military service became obligatory.

The 1930's were marked by sometimes violent nationalist activities which tried to force Puerto Rican independence. Dr. Pedro Albízu Campos emerged as the key figure of this movement.

April 12, 1932: The "Nationalists" invade the Capitol in San Juan.

October 21, 1937: The founding of the "Partido Independentista". It has the same long range goals as the "Nationalists" but insists on using peaceful means.

March 21, 1937: Date of the "Ponce Massacre". A parade by the "Nationalists" in the second largest town of the island ends in brutal police repression. It leaves 21 persons dead and over one hundred wounded.

July 21, 1940: Founding of the "Partido Popular Democrático" under the charismatic leader and later governor Luis Muñoz Marín. He had at that time not yet abandoned hope for winning political sovereignty for his country.

July 25, 1946: U.S. President Harry S. Truman appoints Jesús T. Piñero as the first Puerto Rican governor on the island after the resignation of the American Rexford Guy Tugwell.

November 2, 1948: Luis Muñoz Marín becomes the first Puerto Rican governor elected by popular vote. He held this function until 1964. In 1970 he withdrew from active politics. Muñoz Marín[10] proved the most influential politician among the 92 delegates who formulated and negotiated the new Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Spanish: Estado Libre Asociado).

July, 1950: "Various government agencies... (are) placed under the authority of the Economic Development Administration (FOMENTO). The promotion of Puerto Rico as an ideal location for external investment in industrial enterprise was largely initiated with the Industrial Incentives Act of 1947 and 1948."[11] This marked the beginning of a rapid industrialization of Puerto Rico.

October 30, 1950: The "Nationalists" start a desperate armed revolt. It is put down by the police; Albizu Campos is arrested November 2, along with more than a thousand people. Twenty-five persons are killed. Followers of Albizu try to storm the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. on March 1, 1954.

March 3, 1952: The new status of Puerto Rico is approved by the Puerto Ricans with 375,000 to 83,000 votes. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is proclaimed on the steps of the San Juan Capitol on July 25, 1952.[12] The Puerto Rican flag of the 1895 Revolutionary Council of New York is legalized and used together with the U.S. flag.

Ever since 1952 and the establishment of the Commonwealth the political discussion seems obsessed by the issue of the present and/or future status of the island.[13] The options seem fairly clear: statehood (*i.e.* Puerto Rico as a state in the American Union), as advocated by the "New Progressive Party" ("Partido Nuevo Progresista"); independence as proposed by the "Puerto Rican Independence Party" ("Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño") and the "Puerto Rican Socialist Party" ("Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño"); and finally the continuation of the *status quo* as represented by the "Popular

Democratic Party" ("Partido Popular Democrâtico").[14] Since the victory in October of 1977 of the "Partido Nuevo Progresista" under Romero Barceló, increased uneasiness especially within the cultural and intellectual elite is causing considerable tension. The continuing massive influx of foreign capital, a rather unsubtle pro-Americanism pervading the mass media and a concomitant additional weakending of traditional Spanish-Caribbean culture are feared and objected to by identity conscious circles.

One of the most sensitive areas in the culture clash which has existed ever since the U.S. took Puerto Rico in 1898, the language issue, is having a lively comeback. Literature on Spanish versus English as the language of instruction and on the question of bilingualism is vast and can be traced back several decades.[15] In addition, another issue is the spectre of "Spanglish",[16] an odd mixture of both languages, which is a reality in New York but which is felt as a menace on the island. It is important to remember that after fifty years of English as enforced language of instruction, Spanish was finally established officially in that function by the then newly elected Commissioner of Education, Mariano Villaronga, on January 12, 1949.[17] Since that date English is a compulsory subject matter at school and, except for the private schools of the upper middle-class and despite a certain prestige because of its monetary value, is very often felt as such.[18]

3. Forms and Aspects of Puerto Rican Dependence

If Puerto Rico and its status are relatively seldom found in the abundant literature on dependence[19] of the last twenty years, there are well established Puerto Rican scholars who insist on the existing colonial status of the island. The best known among them is the sociologist and historian Manuel

Maldonado-Denis.[20] Socialist Cuba every now and then presents the case of Puerto Rico to the Decolonization Committee at the United Nations, which usually declares that the island has a right to independence and confers the affair to a subcommittee for further investigation.[21]

A host of facts, both political and economic, seems to indicate that people like Maldonado-Denis are not totally wrong. The U.S. remain Puerto Rico's only significant trading partner. "In 1968-1970, the U.S. received approximately 89 per cent of Puerto Rico's exports and supplied just under 80 per cent of its imports. In 1971, the figures were 76 per cent and 92 per cent respectively."[22] Primary materials like oil are exported and have to be imported again in a different and more expensive form.[23] So far business has enjoyed a tax exempt period of up to seventeen years, which explains why factories are suddenly abandoned and why a continuous economic development is not ensured. "The insular government cannot fund effective aid programs for the unemployed ... because it allows corporations to escape taxation. Federal aid is limited, because American congressmen have little interest in promoting unpopular welfare measures for a voteless population."[24] An illuminating example is the case of U.S. petrochemistry on the island. The establishment of petrochemical plants on the island was seen by many conservatives as a major step ahead. "By 1973, total investments in the petrochemical sector alone were almost $ 1.3 billion."[25] The high hopes were, however, not fulfilled. "There were two important features of this heavy industry expansion process. First, it was characterized by the introduction of capital-intensive technology that increased production and profitability but generated few jobs and even exacerbated the unemployment problem. Between 1962 and 1967, for example, the average number of Puerto Rican workers employed in the factories set up under the industrialization program declined from 80 to 55 per factory. Existing petrochemical plants, on the other hand, have been able to create a meager total of 7,700 new jobs."[26] The differential between the hourly earnings of workers in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico has by no means narrowed in the last decade. It amounted to $ 1.34 in 1960, to $ 1.60 in 1970 and to $ 1.82 in 1972. The industrialization boom on the island has not worked the miracle the founders of the FOMENTO program had expected.[27] According to the Division of Public Welfare of Puerto Rico's Health Department $ 2,000 was "the minimum annual income needed to satisfy a family's basic living requirements in 1964. But, according to Puerto Rican Planning Board data for that year, 25 per cent of families earned less than $ 500 annually and nearly 70 per cent of families earned incomes below $ 2,000.... Over 100,000 families still (i.e. in 1972) receive incomes of less than $ 500 a year."[28]

Political dependence appears as evident as economic dependence. Military affairs, foreign trade, customs, mail and telephone systems are all under U.S. sovereignty. Puerto Ricans vote their own governor into office, but are excluded from elections to the U.S. Congress and Senate. The Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. may declare any Puerto Rican piece of legislation unconstitutional. A vast number of trips to the American capital has been made by Puerto Rican politicians and lobbyists from the very beginning of U.S.-Puerto Rican relations. In view of the proximity of Castro's Cuba and the Panama Canal zone, the strategic value of the island is beyond doubt of considerable importance to the U.S.[29]

Puerto Ricans have benefited from American efforts in the construction of the road system, the area of public health (malaria and other chronical diseases are extinct) and in social welfare. At present over twenty per cent of the island's population are unemployed and live from American food stamps ("cupones") - a dubious gift which does not enhance the people's morale and dignity, nor does it help the economy. The colonial syndrom, the sense of one's own powerlessness, so aptly described by Frantz Fanon,[30] is by no means absent in Puerto Rico.

4. Some Characteristics of the Island Population[31]

U.S. hegemony in Puerto Rico has changed the island's culture in the last eighty years. The extent of the change and the response of Puerto Ricans are extremely difficult to assess. Even within the same socio-economic groups, as for instance in the more acculturated upper classes which have profited most from Puerto Rican affiliation with the U.S., opinions vary greatly as regards the desirability of Americanization.[32]

One of the phenomena that is becoming evident is the shrinking of the traditional extended family to the nuclear family under the pressure of industrialization. Obligations to one's family and friends are, however, still stressed in Puerto Rican culture. Godparentage, which can take on a mystical component, is still quite alive. The family maintains considerable influence in the process of courtship. Despite the existence of "machismo", which seems on the whole less pronounced than in Chicano society, mothers and wives exert a strong influence on sons and husbands. The cult of virginity, usually found in conjunction with the so-called double standard, seems to decline. Consensual unions present to date a rather elevated percentage in the lower classes, but are decreasing as spiritual care and economic benefits are becoming linked with regularized unions. In 1960 only 13.5 per cent of the marriage total were listed as consensual unions, as compared to 25.0 per cent in 1950.[33]

In human relations the sensitive key words "dignidad" and "respeto", mentioned already in the Chicano section, play an important role and are understood by all social classes. Perhaps the terms denoting the opposite, "relajón" and "sinverguenza" ("the one who feels small", and "a shameless person") should be mentioned.[34] Another basic value in Puerto Rican culture is usually summed up by the term "personalismo". It implies a high respect for the individual as a personality regardless of his or her monetary value. Many Puerto Ricans trust and rely on persons rather than on impersonal organizations or systems whose efficiency alone is not reason enough for admiration. One of the numerous difficulties for Puerto Ricans on the mainland consists of having to confront offices and organizations rather than trustworthy individuals.[35]

Roughly eighty per cent of Puerto Ricans are Roman Catholics. In fact, the island "was the first administrative center of the Catholic Church in the Western world. The first diocese in the Western Hemisphere was established in San Juan in 1511..." The Catholic Church on the island has suffered from its close ties with the colonial Spanish regime and after 1898 with its overt Americanization. It was only in 1961 that the island was granted its first native bishop with Luis Aponte Martinez, who was distinctly pro-American. The Church has "left the majority of Puerto Ricans untouched". Religious life is lived in the spirit of "personalismo" at saints' fiestas or takes place at home.

With U.S. rule Protestantism arrived on the island. The majority of the twenty per cent Protestant Puerto Ricans probably belong to Pentecostal and other revivalist or fundamentalist sects. Some authors attribute the success of these groups to the emotional and personal needs of segments of a population which feel menaced in their traditional ways, live in a kind of psychological vacuum, and could not be reached by an aloof, hierarchically structured Catholic Church.[36]

A third component of spiritual life may be found in spiritualism, a religious practice which ranges from more or less scientific forms based on Alain Kardec to less sophisticated folk practices. Through a medium spirits of the dead are consulted. The psychological value of the cults is not denied by most researchers. Both on the island and on the mainland stores called "botánicas" sell a host of objects, from herbs, candles and lotions to prayerbooks and live pigeons. In some folk practices, as in the "santería", West African gods and Christian saints merge into a synchretized religion which was found to be especially developed in Cuba. It is estimated that up to forty per cent of Puerto Ricans, mostly among the poor, reconcile spiritualism with nominal Catholicism.[37]

5. Migration to the Mainland

The social tensions on the over-populated island alone could account for Puerto Rican mass migration. The attractions of the U.S., and especially of New York City, appear with astonishing regularity in the insular mass media. Both from a demographic and a socio-economic point of view, migration to the U.S. has functioned as an "escape valve". It is also dividing a nation.

According to the U.S. Census of 1970, 811,000 Puerto Ricans who were born on the island lived in New York City; 618,664 persons of Puerto Rican parentage have to be added to the first figure given. No data are available as to third generation Puerto Ricans. They are estimated between 50,000 and 300,000. In New York City the majority of Puerto Ricans live today in Manhattan (Washington Heights, East Harlem, Lower East Side), Brooklyn (Williamsburg) and The Bronx (South Bronx, Morrisiania).[38]

Mass migration from the island to the mainland did not set in before 1945. In 1920, the Census listed only 7,364 migrants; another study of 1930 reported 44,908; and the 1940 Census showed 61,463 persons of Puerto Rican birth residing in New York. The main areas of settlement for the early periods were the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Harlem. In the fifties, Puerto Ricans also moved into East Harlem, which has become the area most commonly referred to as "el barrio", the Puerto Rican neighborhood or ghetto.[39] Since the 1960's, an increasing dispersion of migrants throughout the U.S. can be witnessed.[40]

"According to the 1960 U.S. Census of Population, first generation Puerto Ricans residing in the United States had completed more median years of schooling than the Island inhabitants, but less median years of education than return migrants. These findings held both for males and females." The respective figures for Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. are 7.9 (males) and 7.1 (females), for return migrants 8.6 and 7.6, for islanders 4.8 and 4.3. The average figures for the U.S. are 10.4 (males) and 10.8 (females).[41]

Usually the Puerto Rican elite does not stay in the U.S. but receives some part of its education there and then returns to the island. The vast majority of migrants (about 70 per cent) are unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The roads to the low rent projects in greater New York very often lead from the Puerto Rican hills through the slums of the San Juan area. "Only 16.7 per cent of the migrants are in white collar occupations, as compared with 32.9 per cent of the Island inhabitants and 44.0 per cent of the return migrants."

"About one fifth of the male migrants were upwardly mobile, but almost twice as many experienced downward mobility. Among female migrants, the same proportion were downward mobile, but even fewer moved up."[42] Puerto Ricans are the economically weakest group in New York. A 1967 study "indicated that median family income of Puerto Rican families in the Bronx was $ 400.- lower than that of the Blacks".[43]

6. The Agony of Acculturation

In New York traditional Puerto Rican lifestyles, already menaced on the island, are exposed to strong pressures in a painful process of acculturation. Most newcomers dream of going back to the island and owning a house there.[44] Since the early seventies, back migration is keeping the figures at a balance with the newly arrived. The frequent and rather modestly priced back and forth shuffle between the Caribbean and New York maintains strong ties with the island culture and tends to slow down a potential acculturation.

Family unity suffers severely under unaccustomed pressures that range from confining, unsanitary housing conditions and chronic unemployment to language barriers and various neuroses. Unemployment is especially dramatic for the group when the overall economy in the city is lagging and competition with 1.5 million blacks is fierce. "Although they are only about 15 per cent of the city's population, Puerto Ricans constitute about 40 per cent of the recipients of public welfare in the form of Aid to Dependent Children." The drug and alcohol problem among the young is immense and seemingly hopeless. The official figures - "23 per cent of the registered heroin addicts are Puerto Ricans" - may be mere estimates of the total number of addicts.[45]

The generation under twenty-five is pushing its education energetically. In view of the fact that "in 1971 almost 23 per cent of children in public schools in New York City were Puerto Rican" and "only 4 per cent of the student body of" the City University of New York "and less than 1 per cent of the student body in the State University system was Puerto Rican",[46] this movement into city-supported colleges is of major significance for the future of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. The first college to meet the needs of young Puerto Ricans in New York, Hostos Community College, was established in 1969 under acute pressure from militants in one of the most disastrous areas of New York, the South Bronx. Through a policy of open admissions and the effects of the passing of the Bilingual Act in November of 1967,[47] a substantial increase in the enrollment of Puerto Rican students was achieved in the early 1970's. Puerto Rican Studies or departments exist in most institutions of the City University of New York (e.g. Brooklyn College, Bronx Community College, Herbert H. Lehman College, Manhattan Community College) as well as at the State University at Buffalo, N.Y.[48]

If the first generation's problems are frequently dominated by material concerns, their sons and daughters face serious identity problems. The question of cultural allegiance is often linked with racial issues. The renowned New York born author Piri Thomas, himself a mulatto, has described the dilemma dramatically in his autobiographical novel Down These Mean Streets (New York, 1967; esp. Chapters 11-19). The rigid distinction between black and white as used in the U.S. is foreign to Puerto Ricans. On the island as a rule one's socio-economic class and not color determines one's status in society. Segregation in any form has hardly existed on the island. The term "negro" or "negra" is part of the most affectionate vocabulary. Many times racial classification depends on the speaker; for the "browns" alone seven terms may be used, "trigueño" being the most current. The upper classes in Puerto Rico, however, have, to a certain degree, accepted American notions of race distinctions.[49]

Puerto Rican political influence in New York is still rather feeble. One of the reasons for being under-represented lies in the fact that, unlike other newcomers, Puerto Ricans could make use of a housing policy (to which very few really had an alternative), the public housing projects.[50] The projects being scattered over various parts of the city prevented a compact demographic concentration which most other immigrant groups had at an early stage of their residence in the U.S. and which accounted for a voting potential. In addition, the literacy test in English excluded many Puerto Ricans from registering until the Civil Rights Act of 1965 was passed. Since then evidence of six completed school years in Puerto Rico is considered sufficient. A considerable number of Puerto Ricans abstain from voting; if they do vote they vote overwhelmingly for the "Democratic Party". So far the most prominent Puerto Rican politician in New York has been Herman Badillo Rivera.[51] In 1970, he became the first elected Puerto Rican Congressman. With the advent of Edward Koch as Mayor of New York City in the fall of 1977, Badillo resigned from Congress and is now one of the deputy mayors of New York. The second well established politician is former State Senator Roberto García, who is now Badillo's successor in Congress. Nothing comparable to a "Raza Unida Party" exists in New York. The year 1978 indicates a slight advance in political affairs for Puerto Ricans. Among the 43 predominantly conservative members of the City Council are three Puerto Ricans, Luis Olmedo (representing Brooklyn), Robert Rodríguez and Gilberto Gerena-Valentín (both representing The Bronx).[52]

One radical movement which gained wide attention should be mentioned. In 1967, a Chicago-based Puerto Rican street gang turned into a politically militant group and became the "Young Lords". One year later, an independent branch which split totally from the Chicago section and called itself the "Young Lords Party", was established in New York. A product of the ghetto and its underprivileged, the paramilitary group borrowed ideas and action programs from the "Black Panther Party" and worked towards a socialist revolution in the U.S. and for Puerto Rican independence. It never won the subproletariat's following and changed into the Maoist "Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization" in 1972.[53]

7. Cultural Life and its Organization in the New York Puerto Rican Community

Since the 1960's numerous cultural activities of Puerto Ricans in New York have enriched the city's already highly varied cultural scene. "The Association of Hispanic Arts" publishes a bi-monthly bulletin, Hispanic Arts, which announces most of the events.[54] "The Ballet Hispánico of New York" and "The Puerto Rican Dance Theater" teach and present traditional Puerto Rican dances as well as modern dance. There are, as a rule, roughly a dozen theaters, some of them short-lived, with Puerto Rican bills and actors. The best known among them are Miriam Colôn's "Puerto Rican Traveling Theater", "Nuestro Teatro" on 277 Park Avenue South, and the "Nuyorican Poets Café" on 505 East 6th Street, which mainly offers poetry readings. Organizations promoting Puerto Rican culture in the city of New York include the "Amigos del Barrio", the "Association of Puerto Rican-Hispanic Culture", "Friends of Puerto Rico", the "Puerto Rican Center of the Arts". The Marxist oriented "Center for Puerto Rican Studies" on 445 West 59th Street houses a library and sponsors research projects and lectures. A series of museums and galleries like the

"Brooklyn Museum", the "Caymán Gallery", the "Museo del Barrio", the "Museum of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" present and encourage painters from the mainland and the island. Since most organizations are privately endowed, a great deal of energy has to be invested in the annual fund drive; this is, of course, an obstacle to an untroubled and consistent development of the arts. Incidentally, one of the most important backers has been the "New York State Council on the Arts".

Puerto Rican creative writing on the mainland has not quite reached the scope of the "Chicano Renaissance"; it is in part a kind of underground literature, has traits of a counterculture and is sometimes difficult to obtain. It has until the midseventies been determined to a considerable extent by ghetto conditions and gives expression to social criticism, protest and sardonic humor. The vast majority of the writers publish in English with key words left in Spanish. Most writers are clearly under forty; Piri Thomas, who has turned fifty at the end of September 1978, and Nicholasa Mohr are exceptions.[55] The influence of Black contemporary literature, of the speech rhythms in street talk and of the Salsa music scene seems tangible in many authors. Most were in the late sixties and early seventies politically active in one way or another, usually with a leftist, third world, anti-imperialistic orientation. In the last few years many writers tend to stress craft and quality more than strict adherence to ethnic in-group writing. Whereas for most visual artists the island occupies an important place as a site of idyllic peace and belonging, with the mountain home of the farmer ("jíbaro") and the extinct Taíno Indian as favorite topics, most writers concentrate their efforts on the American Dream that went wrong for them.

[1] See, for instance, Süddeutsche Zeitung, October 27, 1977, front page, and Nürnberger Nachrichten, July 5, 1977, 6. TV documentaries, like the excellent 90 minute production "Lefty", which dealt with youth gangs in The Bronx and was shown on May 17, 1978, are exceptions and run the risk of purveying a lopsided image of Puerto Ricans in New York.

[2] The New Encyclopedia Britannica. (Chicago, etc., c1974) XV, 259ff. El Mundo (San Juan) July 1st., 1979, 1.

[3] Authors writing on 20th century Puerto Rico very often neglect aspects of Puerto Rico in the 19th century. For the U.S. invasion of the island and 19th century Puerto Rico see Edward J. Berbusse, The United States in Puerto Rico 1898-1900. (Chapel Hill, N.C., c1966), Salvador Brau, La colonización de Puerto Rico. (1907, repr. San Juan, 1966), Salvador Brau, Historia de Puerto Rico. (New York, 1904), Charles H. Brown, The Correspondents' War. Journalists in the Spanish-American War. (New York, c1967), Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, The Caribbean Policy of the United States 1890-1920. (Baltimore, 1920), Lidio Cruz Monclova, Historia de Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX). (Río Piedras, 1958-1964) Tres vols., Richard Harding Davis, The Cuban and the Porto Rican Campaign. (New York, 1898, esp. Chapter Eight), Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War. (Boston, 1958), Angel Rivero, Crónica de la guerra hispano-americana en Puerto Rico. (Madrid, 1922), Henry Watterson, History of the Spanish-American War. Embracing a Complete Review of Our Relations with Spain. (No place, 1898), Eric Williams, From Columbus to Castro - The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969. (New York, 1970), Joseph E. Wilson, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press. (New York, 1939).

[4] Federico Ribes Tovar, comp., A Chronological History of Puerto Rico. (New York, c1973) 36.

[5] See Frederick Merk, op. cit., 256f. and Albert K. Weinburg, op. cit.

[6] See David Healy, U.S. Expansionism. The Imperialist Surge in the 1890's. (Madison, etc., 1970), Walter LaFeber, The New Empire. An Interpretation of American Expansionism 1860-1898. (Ithaca, N.Y., c1963), Ernest Richard May, American Imperialism. A Speculative Essay. (New York, 1968), Julius W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1898. The Acquisition of Hawai and the Spanish Islands. (1936, repr. Gloucester, Mass., 1959), E. Berkeley Tompkins, Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920. (Philadelphia, c1970), William A. Williams,

The Roots of the Modern American Empire. A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society. (New York, c1969). For the treaty terms with Spain see William M. Malloy, comp., *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements*. (Washington D.C., 1910) Vol. II, 1688-96.

[7] Ramón Medina Ramírez, *El movimiento libertador en la historia de Puerto Rico*. (Santurce, 1954) Tres vols., Cueto Pérez Moris, *Historia de la insurrección de Lares*. (Barcelona, 1972).

[8] Luis Bonafoux, *Betances*. (Barcelona, 1901), Carlos N. Carreras, *Betances, el Antillano proscrito*. (San Juan, 1961), Lidio Cruz Monclova, *op. cit.*, Bolívar Pagán, *Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños*. (San Juan, 1959) Dos vols., Ada Suárez Díaz, *El doctor Ramón Emeterio Betances: su vida y su obra*. (San Juan, 1968). See also Eugenio María de Hostos, *Obras completas*. (La Habana, 1939) Veinte vols.

[9] The following is taken, unless stated otherwise, from Federico Ribes Tovar, *op. cit.*

[10] Luis Muñoz Marín, "Breakthrough from Nationalism" (The Godkin Lectures). (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). A flattering biography exists by Thomas H. Aitken, Jr., *Poet in the Fortress*. (New York, 1964). Far more critical are the essays on Muñoz by César Andreu Iglesias, *Un hombre acorralado por la historia*. (San Juan, 1964). An edition of the writings and speeches of Albizu Campos is in preparation: Benjamín Torres, comp., *Pedro Albizu Campos - Obras escogidas*. (San Juan, 1975) Tomo I.

[11] Morris Morley, "Dependence and Development in Puerto Rico", in Alberto López and James Petras, eds., *Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans*. Studies in History and Society. (New York, etc., c1974) 223f.

[12] On July 23, 1967, "in status referendum, commonwealth wins 65.0 per cent of the votes, compared with 38.9 per cent for statehood and .6 per cent for independence." Karl Wagenheim, *Puerto Rico*. A Profile. (New York, etc., ^{5}1973) 263.

[13] Very useful is the collection of *Documents on the Constitutional History of Puerto Rico.* (Second series, Washington D.C., June 1964), edited by the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. See also Karl Friedrich Kirchner, *Die Rechtsstellung des Commonwealth of Puerto Rico*. (Beihefte zum Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien, Bd. XVIII) (Heidelberg, 1967), and Gordon K. Lewis, *Freedom and Power in the Caribbean*. (New York, 1964).

[14] For a portrait of Puerto Rican parties up to 1964 see Robert W. Anderson, *Party Politics in Puerto Rico*. (Stanford, Cal., 1965).

[15] Some of the best publications on the language issue in book form are: J.L. Dillard, *All-American English*. A History of the English Language in America. (New York, c1974) 190-222, Ernesto Juan Fonfrías, *Razón del idioma español en Puerto Rico*. (San Juan, 1966), Germán de Granda Gutierrez, *Transculturación e interferencia linguistica en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo (1898-1968)*. (Bogotá, 1968), Washington Lloréns, *El habla popular de Puerto Rico*. (Río Piedras, ^{2}1971), Rubén del Rosario, *La lengua en Puerto Rico*. (San Juan, 1960).

[16] Joshua A. Fishman, Robert L. Cooper and Roxena Ma, *Bilingualism in the Barrio*. (Bloomington, etc., c1971), Rose Nash, "Spanglish: Language Contact in Puerto Rico", *American Speech*, XLV, nos. 3-4, fall/winter 1970, 223-33.

[17] Council on Higher Education, *Estudio del sistema educativo de Puerto Rico*. (Río Piedras, 1962), Erwin H. Epstein, ed., *Politics and Education: A Documentary Survey of the Language Issue*. (Methuen, N.J., 1970), Ramón Mellado, *Culture and Education in Puerto Rico*. (San Juan, 1948), Aída Negrón de Montilla, *Americanization in Puerto Rico and the Public School System 1900-1930*. (Río Piedras, 1971).

[18] Karl Wagenheim, *op. cit.*, 154-78.

[19] Among recent publications see especially Samir Amin, *Capitalismo periférico y comercio internacional*. (Buenos Aires, 1974), Vania Bambirra, *El capitalismo dependiente latinoamericano*. (México, 1975), Frank Bonilla and Robert Girling, comps., *Structures of Dependency*. (New York, 1973), Fernando H. Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, *Abhängigkeit und Entwicklung in Lateinamerika*. (Frankfurt/M., c1976), James D. Cockcroft, André Gunder Frank and Dale L. Johnson, *Dependence and Underdevelopment*. Latin America's Political Economy. (Garden City, N.Y., c1972), Ruy Mauro Marini, *Dialéctica de la dependencia*. (México, 1973), Dieter Senghaas, Hg., *Peripherer Kapitalismus*. Analysen über Abhängigkeit und Unterentwicklung. (Frankfurt/M., c1974).

[20] His major works are *Puerto Rico: mito y realidad*. (Barcelona, 1969, ^{2}1973), *Puerto Rico: A Socio-Historic Interpretation*. (Orig. in Mexico, 1968, New York, c1972), *Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos: emigración y colonialismo*. México, etc., 1976). He has, in addition, published numerous articles.

[21] E.g. on August 28, 1972. Federico Ribes Tovar, op. cit., 584.

[22] Morris Morley, op. cit., 253, footnote no. 87. For the last few years an Economic Development Administration Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in Frankfurt, W. Germany, has attempted to attract European businesses to the island.

[23] According to Morris Morley, op. cit., 229, who refers to Rita M. Maldonado, The Role of the Financial Sector in the Economic Development of Puerto Rico. (New York, 1970) 39, "in 1967, imported consumer goods represented 25.2 per cent of total consumption in Puerto Rico as compared to only 4 per cent in the case of the United States."

[24] Diana Christopulos, "Puerto Rico in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Survey", in Adalberto López and James Petras, eds., op. cit., 161.

[25] Morris Morley, op. cit., 226.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Morris Morley, op. cit., 232. See also Robert D. Crassweller, The Caribbean Community: Changing Societies and U.S. Policy. (New York, 1972), Antonio J. González, Economía política de Puerto Rico. (San Juan, 1967), Manuel Maldonado-Denis, Puerto Rico: A Socio-Historic Interpretation, esp. Chapter Seven, 151-88, T.G. Mathews and F.M. Andic, eds., Politics and Economics in the Carribean. (Río Piedras, 1971), Thomas Mathews, Puerto Rican Politics and the New Deal. (Gainsville, Fla., 1960), Angel G. Quintero Rivera, ed., Lucha obrera en Puerto Rico. (Río Piedras, 1971), William H. Stead, Fomento: The Economic Development of Puerto Rico. (New York, 1972).

[28] Morris Morley, op. cit., 230f. His main source was the NACLA Latin American and Empire Report, VI, no. 6, July-August 1972, 4.

[29] "The Pentagon controls 13 per cent of Puerto Rico's land and has five atomic bases, including Ramey Air Base." Michael Myerson, "Puerto Rico, Our Backyard Colony", Ramparts Magazine, VIII, June 1970, 50-2.

[30] Frantz Fanon, Les damnés de la terre. (Paris, 1961).

[31] Some valuable studies of a more general nature are Celeste Benítez and Roberto Rexach Benítez, Puerto Rico 1964: A People at the Crossroads. (San Juan, 1964), Joseph Fitzpatrick, Puerto Rican Americans. The Meaning of Migration to

the Mainland. (Ethnic Groups in America Life Series) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., c1971), Gordon K. Lewis, *op. cit.*, René Marqués, *Ensayos (1953-1966)*. (San Juan, 1967), Clarence Senior, *Americans All: Our Citizens from the Caribbean*. (New York, 1965), Julian H. Steward, ed., *The People of Puerto Rico*. A Study in Social Anthropology. (Urbana, Ill., 1956, ^{2}1966). For slum culture see Oscar Lewis, *La Vida*.

[32] See the report by Sidney W. Mintz, "Puerto Rico: An Essay in the Definition of National Culture", originally prepared for the U.S. - Puerto Rico Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico, Washington D.C., 1966, reprinted in Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni, eds., *The Puerto Rican Experience*. A Sociological Sourcebook. (Totowa, N.J., 1973) 26-90.

[33] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 83-90.

[34] Sidney W. Mintz, *op. cit.*, 77f.

[35] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 90f., Scott Cook, "The Prophets: A Revivalistic Folk Religious Movement in Puerto Rico", *Caribbean Studies*, IV, no. 4, January 1965, 20-35.

[36] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 118-22.

[37] *Ibid.*, 122f. Joseph Bram, "Spirits, Mediums and Believers in Contemporary Puerto Rico", *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*. (Second series) XX, no. 3, January 1958, 340-7, Pablo Garrido. *Esotería y fervores populares de Puerto Rico*. (San Juan, 1942), Migene González-Whippler, *Santería*. African Magic in Latin America. (Garden City, N.Y., 1975). For a German translation of Santería prayers see Wolfgang Binder, "Santería - volkstümlicher Kult der Puerto Ricaner", in Städtische Galerie, Hg., *Puerto Ricaner in New York*. Volk zwischen zwei Kulturen. (Erlangen, 1978) 44-9.

[38] Adalberto López, "The Puerto Rican Diaspora. A Survey", in Adalberto López and James Petras, eds., *op. cit.*, 316-46.

[39] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 53-6.

[40] According to the 1970 Census as quoted by Adalberto López, *op. cit.*, 323, the figures were for Chicago: 83,277, for Philadelphia: 40,930, for Jersey City, N.J.: 38,038, for Newark, N.J.: 37,009, and for Boston: 11,565 respectively. During my visits to the Puerto Rican ghettos in Boston in the last three years officials would invariably estimate the Puerto Rican group to be above the figure of 60,000.

[41] Eva E. Sandis, "Characteristics of Puerto Rican Migrants to, and from, the United States", *International Migration Review*, IV, no. 2, spring 1970, 22-41. For recent figures and analyses from a Marxist point of view see: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, *Taller de Migración. Conferencia de historiografía: Abril, 1974*. (New York, 1974). See also Manuel Maldonado-Denis, *Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos*, Luis Nieves Falcón, *Los emigrantes puertorriqueños*. (Río Piedras, 1975), Lloyd Rogler, *Migrants in the City*. (New York, 1972), Clarence Senior, *The Puerto Ricans: Strangers then Neighbors*. (New York, 1965), Patricia Sexton, *Spanish Harlem: Anatomy of Poverty*. (New York, 1965), Dan Wakefield, *Island in the City: The World of Spanish Harlem*. (Boston, 1959).

[42] Eva E. Sandis, *op. cit.*, 31-3.

[43] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 59.

[44] For a treatment of return migration in the sixties consult José Hernández Alvarez, *Return Migration to Puerto Rico*. (Berkeley, Cal., 1967).

[45] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 71, 98-100, 155.

[46] Adalberto López, *op. cit.*, 335. Of great value to the study of education as it effects Puerto Ricans on the mainland are Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni, *The Puerto Rican Community of Newark, N.J.: An Educational Program for its Children*. (Newark, N.J., 1970), Richard J. Margolis, *The Losers: A Report on Puerto Rico and the Public Schools*. (New York, 1968), J. Cayce Morrison, Director, *The Puerto Rican Study: 1953-57*. (New York, 1958).

[47] Herman Lafontaine, *Bilingual Education* (1969), reprinted in Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni, eds., *op. cit.*, 325-40.

[48] Adalberto López, *op. cit.*, 332f. His source was University of the State of New York, State Education Department, *Puerto Rican Studies Programs and Related Courses*. (Albany, N.Y., 1973).

[49] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, 101-14. A useful background study is Luis M. Díaz Soler, *Historia de la esclavitud negra en Puerto Rico*. (Río Piedras, 1965). A more recent, brief treatment by the same author is "Relaciones raciales en Puerto Rico", *Revista/Review Interamericana*, III, no. 4,

winter 1974, 61-72. Samuel Betances, "Race and Search for Identity", in María Teresa Babín and Steiner, eds., Borinquen. (New York, c1974) 425-38, is unusually critical of the situation on the island. A richly documented, angry work is Isabelo Zenón Cruz, Narciso descubre su trasero. El negro en la cultura puertorriqueña. (Humacao, P.R., 1974, ^{2}1975) Dos vols.

For the issue of the high rates of personality disorders among Puerto Ricans in New York see Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 161-9, and John W. Berry and Robert C. Amis, "Acculturative Stress", Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, V, no. 4, December 1974, 382-405.

[50] A good example of an attempt at decent housing for Puerto Ricans in New York are the Taíno Towers in East Harlem. They are part of the work of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a federal agency. Harry Turner, "Federal Housing Policy: Why Latinos Are Left Out in the Cold", Nuestro. A Magazine for Latinos, II, no. 6, June 1978, 26-32. For the still existing financial difficulties that have kept the project from functioning see Michael Goodwin, "Taíno Towers Opening Still in the Indefinite Future". New York Times, April 22, 1979, 37.

[51] Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 57-9.

[52] See "Reginal Report", Nuestro. A Magazine for Latinos, II, no. 6, June 1978, 11f. Joseph P. Fitzpatrick gives a brief description of the most important community oriented organizations in New York, op. cit., 63-70.

[53] Michael Abramson, ed., Palante. The Young Lords Party. (New York, ^{2}1971), Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords", Ramparts Magazine, IX, no. 4, October 1970, 19-25, Federico Ribes Tovar, op. cit., 566f.

[54] For a complete list of Puerto Rican cultural organizations and media in New York see Städtische Galerie Erlangen, Hg., op. cit., 32f.

[55] Major poets are Lucky Cienfuegos, Victor Hernández Cruz, Sandra Esteves, José Angel Figueroa, Jesús Papoleto Meléndez, Miguel Piñero, Pedro Pietri, Lorraine Sutton. Novelists have so far been rather scarce: Lefty Barreto, Nicholasa Mohr and Piri Thomas. Miguel Piñero, the author of Short Eyes, is to date the only published Nuyorican dramatist. The best bilingual poetry anthologies were edited by Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero, Nuyorican Poetry. (New York, 1975), and by Alfredo Matilla and Iván Silén, The Puerto Rican Poets. (New

York, 1972). Eleven Nuyorican poems were for the first time translated into German by Wolfgang Binder, in Städtische Galerie, Hg., op. cit., 34-43.

II. The Interviews

A. Mexican Americans (Chicanos)

1. Martin E. C.
   24 years
   San Antonio, Texas/Chicago, Ill. (E, S)

Q: Did you live in San Antonio all your life?

A: Till I was sixteen, then I moved to Chicago with my family. I still have a sister living in San Antonio. She is married there.

Q: How many children were there in the family?

A: Four girls, and I'm the only boy.

Q: What job did your father have?

A: My dad is a painter, a professional painter you could say.

Q: And your mother, did she work?

A: No, she's a housewife.

Q: What exactly do you mean by painter?

A: He paints houses, he's done this all his life. He makes good money.

Q: What schooling did you have in San Antonio?

A: I went all the way up to the twelfth grade.

Q: What background are your parents?

A: My dad is Spanish with a little bit of Aztec Indian. My mom is pure French. My father did not immigrate from Mexico, he was born in Texas.

Q: How would he identify? What would he call himself?

A: A Chicano.

Q: Did you feel that he was proud of his Mexican heritage?

A: Yes, I did. He said it to me.

Q: What language is spoken in the home?

A: Mostly Spanish is spoken.

Q: How did your mother learn Spanish?

A: My dad taught her.

Q: Was your father fluent?

A: Yes, he was quite fluent.

Q: Did his parents immigrate?

A: Yes, his father did.

Q: Did you have any difficulty in school by being Chicano?

A: No, because the school I went to was mostly Chicano.

Q: Who ran it, mostly Chicanos?

A: The principal was Chicano.

Q: Was Chicano history taught?

A: Right, it was. And I think it's still taught today at that school.

Q: Was Spanish taught?

A: Yes.

Q: You were never discriminated against in that school?

A: No.

Q: Were there any Anglos?

A: You could say there were, but very few.

Q: Were they discriminated against?

A: No, because we all tried to make the best school out of it, but sometimes, you know, we had our ups and downs with them.

Q: What were some of the downs?

A: Say, you'd go to a football game and they would say, "This is white power", and Chicanos don't like that, you know. And so you had a riot at your hand.

Q: What about girls? Would Chicanos resent Anglos getting a Chicano girl?

A: Sometimes, you know, when you like a Chicano girl and they, you know, liked Anglo guys. So that's where the conflict began.

Q: What happened then?

A: Fights usually.

Q: Fist fights or would they use switch blades?

A: No, fist fights, because a Chicano don't believe in that, they fight it out straight. They don't believe in using weapons or nothing.

Q: What do you think are the differences between a Chicano family and an Anglo family?

A: Their customs, their way of living. Like, most Anglos, they live in a pretty good place, they do, and a Chicano don't. A Chicano got to start out from the scratch, most of the time. That's how my dad did it, he started from the scratch. And that's one of the ways. The other ways are the food, religion. Most Chicanos are Roman Catholics, you know. And Anglos, they're Jews and Protestants and all.

Q: What do you think of Jews?

A: I think they're a little bit too tight with money.

Q: Do you think they're too powerful for their number in America?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: Do you feel that Jews dominate Wall Street finance?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: How did you learn Spanish?

A: My dad taught me when I grew up.

Q: Which language are you more fluent in now, English or Spanish?

A: Spanish, I'd say. Tex-Mex, that is. It ain't real Spanish like the correct Spanish they speak in Mexico, you know. But I know enough to get by.

Q: It is mixed with Anglo terms or how does it sound?

A: Well, it sounds different.

Q: Why don't you give me the next answer in Tex-Mex. Was there any member in your family that influenced you; who influenced you most, and why?

[Pause, at a faster pace than in English.]

A: No, because I haven't had an uncle nor an aunt who'd like me a lot, because the aunts of my dad were all separated from him because they didn't like my ma because she was French. That was the reason. My dad's parents were pure Mexicans and they wanted that he should get married to a Mexican girl, but because he came over here in the war number two and met my ma and they got married and he took her to America. My dad split up with my aunts and my older sister, my middle sister, and they didn't like her either. And my dad said, "Well, since my family don't like her it's better that we split up."[1]

Q: Did you take Spanish in school?

A: I took it in school, but they kicked me out of class. I wouldn't take no attention. I knew most of the stuff, so I was bored. The schoolteacher said to get out. So I says, "O.K.".

Q: Can you write it?

A: A little bit.

Q: Can you read it, can you read a newspaper?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have in your youth any contact with the police?

A: No, never any trouble, not at any time.

Q: Did you take any drugs?

A: Well, I've done some grass, you know. Real hard drugs, I don't come in contact with them.

Q: At the time you went to high school, was marijuana in?

A: Not at that time - a little bit, but not that much. Not like it is today.

Q: Did you feel discriminated against in San Antonio?

A: No, never. They'd let me in every restaurant.

Q: Do you think you look Chicano?

A: No. I have a whiter complexion than most of them, you know.

Q: Do you feel that white Texans are racist?

A: You mean white Anglos? In a way they are, especially the country folks, you know, people that live on a ranch, or something.

Q: How do they show it?

A: Sometimes you'd go up and ask for a job, but they think they're too big and they just turn their face around, you know. There ain't too much you can do about that, you know. You can't cause no trouble with a guy because he puts the law on you, and that's it, you know.

Q: What does "la Raza" mean to you?

A: It means that the whole Mexican Chicano race is together, you know.

Q: Do you feel that Chicanos really are together?

A: Yes. Especially down South, like in Texas. Well. If you go to California some places. If they can't speak Spanish they won't get together with you. They try to avoid you, because they feel ashamed because they can't speak Spanish.

Q: Do you feel that Mexican Americans in Texas are distinct from Chicanos in California and if so in what respect?

A: Yes, they are. Mostly because in California they don't know how to speak Spanish and down in Texas you got to speak it. Because you're Chicano, and in order to get close to the other Chicanos you got to know how to speak it, you know.

Q: Did you ever have close Anglo friends in Texas?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were the majority of your friends Chicano?

A: Yes, they were. Anglos were the exception.

Q: In which way do you find the Chicano character different from the Anglo?

A: In a way they resent you because you're a different race than them, you know. Sometimes they think they're better then all races and like, when you walk into a room, like, when I first got here, there's a white guy, Anglo guy and a half-Italien, and to this day I don't think they don't like Chicanos too good. 'Cause they think the white race is better then anyone.

Q: You don't feel white?

A: No. Or half, because I can't resent my mom's side. But I was brought up more Chicano than Anglo. And I feel that the language is very important.

Q: Do you know any Chicano movement?

A: No, not at the present.

Q: Do you know who the "Brown Berets" are?

A: I have never heard of them until you mentioned them.

Q: Which of the four names: Châvez, Tijerina, Vâldez, Gonsâles do you know and like best?

A: César Châvez. Because, when I was hearing about him, he was always trying to help poor people like the ones that work in the fields, picking grapes and everything. He tried his best for them, you know. He is still around but you don't hear too much about him no more. What I heard of him, he was doing pretty good, you know, getting fair wages for the work, you know.

Q: Is he known in Texas?

A: Yes, he's known in Texas but not as well.

Q: Do you know of any Chicano leaders in Texas?

A: No. Time changes, you know. I haven't lived in San Antonio for at least six years. Time changes. In Chicago you don't hear too much about that because there's mostly whites and Blacks.

Q: Let's hear something about Blacks.

A: They're O.K. as long as they're your friends. As soon as you turn your back they just back-stab you, you know. That I can't see, because that I don't do to them and I don't expect them to do that to me.

Q: Why do you think they do it?

A: Because they think they're the best there is, you know.

Q: So they act like many whites, actually?

A: Right. They're just Black whites we call them, you know.

Q: Do you feel that Chicanos are more generous with other people?

A: Yes, they can get along with any other kind of people there is.

Q: Do you feel they are more brotherly than Blacks?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What do you think are the big problems of the Chicanos today?

A: To me the problem there is: some of them don't want to get ahead, but if you got it in you that you want to get ahead in life you make it, but if you one of them types that don't care, you won't make it. No. Some of them are bashful, you know, they don't want to bring it out of their chest, they just want to hold it in them. And it's better to bring it out and say, "I wanna be this, I wanna be that." And they'll be it.

Q: What other problems are there among the Chicanos today?

A: Jobs. Where I come from in Texas it's pretty hard to get a job, you know, if you're a Chicano. If you want a job they got a white guy most of the time. They look at your school background and if the white guy has more schooling they give it to him, you know. It's hard to know. Sometimes it's just prejudice - the boss is white, so he wants to get a white guy, even though the Chicano may be a hard-working guy, better than the white guy. Most of the time it works that way.

Q: Do you think that America as a whole is a racist society?

A: Yes. There is too many discrimination against all races, and everything.

Q: And why is this?

A: There's too many people, I think. It's too difficult to mix.

Q: Who do you think profits from this?

A: Anglos.

Q: If you had the power to change things in America what would you change?

A: Everybody to be equal. Equal opportunity for everybody, not because he was Black, white or Chicano, equal right for everybody. Accepting that this is the way Jesus Christ made it, you know.

Q: How would you go about getting equal rights, some people would have to go down, some would have to come up.

A: There ain't a way.

Q: What else would you change?

A: It's hard for me to say.

Q: What are things that you dislike, things that you feel should be changed?

A: Education, for one, having more Spanish in the school; some schools do. In some schools they don't teach that, you know, especially up North. That's about it.

Q: How close do you feel to Mexico? What does Mexico mean to you? Would you call it your country?

A: Yes, I would, because my ancestry came from there.

Q: Would you call the USA your country?

A: Yes, because I was born in the United States.

Q: Which is your country?

A: The United States I would have to say.

Q: Have you ever been to Mexico? How far down did you get?

A: On a visit. I got as far down as Mexico City, that's all. I got a lot of friends in Mexico and I enjoyed it very much.

Q: Do you feel really close to Mexicans, closer than to Anglos?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Closer than to Chicanos?

A: No.

Q: What's the difference between a Mexican living in Mexico and a Mexican American born and raised in Texas?

A: In one way it's education. I know guys from Mexico who come to the States and who have good education, but on the whole Chicanos had more education, more opportunities to do it.

Q: Do you know that many Mexicans feel that many Chicanos aren't Mexican any more? What do you think of this?

A: Yes I do. Because Mexicans as a rule don't speak English and Chicanos do. That's one of the ways. I had a lot of friends who went down to Mexico and were run out because they had long hair and yet a Mexican from Mexico can have long hair and they won't do nothing to him. Now it's changing a little, you know.

Q: Why do you think a Mexican reacts that way, just because the Chicano talks English?

A: Most of the time, yes.

Q: Why do you think Mexicans don't like Americans?

A: California, Arizona, Texas belonged to Mexico and the U.S. took it and left just a little bit of land.

Q: Were you taught that in school?

A: Yes, we were taught that in school. It's been so long since '69, you forget a lot of things.

Q: Have you heard the term "machismo" before?

A: No.

Q: Do you know what "macho" is?

A: Es que, ser muy hombre. (To be very virile.)

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: A good life means to me that I can have the best of everything. For example, a good life when I get married, a good job. I want to go to a trade school, auto mechanics. I want a nice family, children. I want to live on the outskirts of a city that it won't be too far into the city.

Q: How do you see your role as a father?

A: I want to give them the best education.

Q: Do you feel that education is important?

A: Yes, it is nowadays.

Q: Would you want to marry a Chicano girl?

A: What my luck runs into, that's what I'll get married to.

Q: You wouldn't mind an Anglo girl?

A: No.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Spanish?

A: Yes, I would. I'm going to teach them.

Q: Would you like your wife, whould she be an Anglo girl, to learn Spanish?

A: I'll teach her.

Q: Suppose she did not want it, would you resent it?

A: No. I got a brother-in-law who is Anglo and who makes no attempt to learn it. And my sister is happy.

Q: What would your reaction be if one or two or three of your sisters married blond, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon Protestants?

A: It's their lives.

Q: Would you prefer them to marry Chicanos?

A: Yes, in a way, because the family would be closer. But once you start going into another race, it might start bringing Chicanos and Anglos a little bit closer together, if it's in that family or in the whole, you know.

Q: What qualities would you like your wife to have?

A: I couldn't say a virgin, because it's hard to find a virgin nowadays. But be good, treat me good, try to do the best, be a good mother.

Q: Do you want her to work outside the house?

A: No. I don't believe in that.

Q: Why?

A: Because I figure that once you marry a girl that is your wife she should be a housewife, man.

Q: You would want to decide things in the house?

A: Right. That's the way it should be.

Q: Would you at least listen to your wife?

A: Oh, I would, you know. I would. And if she had a better opinion than I did, maybe I'd go by it.

Q: But as a last resort, your word would be the right one?

A: Right, right.

Q: What do you think of Puerto Ricans?

A: They're O.K. They got a Spanish background.

Q: Do you feel close to them?

A: Not really.

Q: Why do you think there is such a difference between the two?

A: I think there's a little bit of jealousy between them in the way they're speaking. And they think they're better than Chicanos.

Q: Why?

A: That's one thing that I haven't been able to find out yet, you know. They get along better with Blacks than they get along with Chicanos. They do.

Q: What do they resent in Chicanos?

A: I don't know. Like I said a while ago I ain't been able to figure that out.

Q: Are you in favor of law and order?

A: Oh yes.

Q: What do you understand by law and order?

A: Law and order is not to get into trouble, try to avoid it, you know.

Q: What do you feel should be done to increase safety in the big cities?

A: Too many killings. Even the policemen are getting killed now. They don't get paid enough to put up their lives, you know. I think they should give the policemen more of a pay and insurance, you know, life insurance. Because in Chicago there are a lot of policemen getting killed and all their families gets is 1,500 dollars, you know. What good is that gonna do to the family? A lot of guys are afraid to go out and do their job, you know.

Q: Do you think law and order has been handled correctly?

A: It depends how you look at it, you know. There's a lot of ways you can see it. In some ways it has, in some ways it hasn't.

Q: Do you think it has been abused?

A: Yes, a lot of times. Like, in Chicago, a guy has a nightclub, you know, where the cop says, "If you want some business you better give us some money," you know. And most likely, they'll get caught, eventually they'll get caught. When I was on leave at home I heard on the news, twenty policemen got caught, just doing money on their own, you know, and that's a bad way to do it, you know. They should just get rid of them people and put them in jail or something, for something they did wrong, you know.

Q: Do you feel it is his own fault when a criminal is guilty of a crime?

A: Yes, because to me he knew what he was doing. It's up to him, if he wants to do it, he knows what the consequences are gonna be. He should know better.

Q: Do you feel that his family, his background, has any share in that?

A: No, not necessarily. I can understand some cases. But most of the time it's not the family, it's him, the way be started growing up, you know, after he left the house.

Q: Was your family united?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: You feel that your mom and dad are fairly happy with each other?

A: Yes, they are. They are married over twenty-five years and they ain't split up.

Q: Were there any other women in your father's life?

A: Yes, there were when I was growing up. But it didn't split the marriage.

Q: How did your mother react, did she protest?

A: Yes, she did, but she knew, like, if we'd split up, you know, it would be worse, because we wouldn't have a house or a father to teach us what was right and wrong, you know, or give us advice. So she stuck it out until he realized what was going on.

Q: For how long a period did he have other women?

A: For about two years.

Q: Did you ever meet the other girls?

A: No, but my mon did at her sister. She'd come to the house, you know, and said what was going on.

Q: What do you think of Indians?

A: Indians? Well, they got their own ways of living, you know.

Q: You said your father has a mixed Indian and Spanish background. What did your father tell you about Indians?

A: Well, he just tell me that he got Indian in his blood. He don't tell me that much about them.

Q: You don't feel uneasy having Indian blood?

A: No. The same way I don't feel uneasy because I have French blood, you know. It don't bother me, I know a lot of people who have different kinds of blood in them but they don't wanna admit it. They tell you, "I have just one kind of blood, and that's it." I have my blood from both my parents. How can I be ashamed of what they are? I can't be ashamed of what they are, of what they made me.

Q: Who do you feel helped Chicanos most, which group, which party or organization? Anyone at all?

A: No. I think they'll do it on their own, if they want to do it, you know. I don't think they need a group to back them up what they want to do.

Q: What do you feel Chicanos should do now?

A: Just continue doing whatever they're doing, trying to do the best, knowing what's right. Try to improve their selves, get education, and get ahead in life.

Q: Do you feel that Blacks move too fast, that they get too much support?

A: No. They try to, but when it comes down to it, they ain't got that much support. They try to act it that way because there are so many Black groups, you know. They say, "We belong to that group, we're number one," you know. But usually it don't work that way, you know.

Q: Do you feel that any progress against racism has been made in America in the last few years?

A: Sometimes I even think it's getting worse.

Q: Who do you think is responsible for that?

A: I think that Blacks have a lot to do with it. Most of them, a lot of them, are born in the ghettos, so they think about fights, robs and everything, and that's the way it starts, you know. But usually the fault, it's the Blacks, you know.

Q: Which of the following leaders would you like to pick: Carmichael, King, Guevara, Castro, J.F. Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", the "Black Muslims", Chávez?

A: I'd take Kennedy and César Chávez.

Q: Do you feel that American TV is just to Chicanos in its news and plays?

A: It depends where you live. Like, where we live, we hardly got any Spanish stations, you know. But further down south in Texas, they do and they show more. I think the Chicanos is given the right image.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Do you believe in life after death?

A: [Pause] I believe in God, but not necessarily in life after death.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints? Do you pray to them? Do you expect help from them?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Are you a churchgoer?

A: Before I came into the service I was, but now -. I'm used to going to the same church and I know what it is.

Q: Are you superstitious?

A: No.

Q: Do you think the Devil exists?

A: That's a hard question. Yes and no. I've heard talks from different people, you know. I have never encountered a situation that makes me believe there is a devil. Maybe some day I will. Then maybe I believe in it.

Q: Do you believe it is possible that the Devil can appear in human shape?

A: I heard a lot of people say "yes".

Q: Do you think there are evil spirits?

A: [Pause] I've never been in a situation that made me believe in it.

Q: Do you have dreams?

A: About girls, that's about it.

Q: Do you believe in them?

A: In girls?

Q: No, in dreams.

A: No.

Q: When did you have your first girl?

A: When I was fifteen years old, in San Antonio.

Q: How did it happen?

A: I just met her and that was it, you know. I had known her for a long time, you know. She was in the same school.

Q: Who was the instigator?

A: [Laugh] Me! Of course.

Q: Did you like it or was it awkward the first time?

A: It was O.K., but as you go on you learn more about it, you know.

Q: Do you think you would join a demonstration?

A: No, I wouldn't.

Q: Not one for Chicano rights?

A: It all depends, if it was gonna be for the best, you know. But most of the time the demonstrations they had were just nonsense, and most of the time they don't gain nothing by them, you know. So I don't think I would.

Q: Which neighborhood would you prefer to live in?

A: A Chicano neighborhood.

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[1] A: No, es que, no he tenido un tío ni una tía que me aprecie mucho, porque las tías de mi papá todos fueron separtados porque no querían a mi mamá porque fue francesa. Es por eso. Los papás de mi papá fueron puros mexicanos y querían que él se casará él con una mexicana, pero porque él vino para acá en la guerra número dos y encontró a mi mamá y se casaron y se trujo pá' América. Le partó mi papá de mis tías y mi hermana mayor, la hermana media, y tampoco a ella la quisieron. Y mi papá dijo, "Pues, si mi familia no la quieren, mejor que nos separtamos."

2. Daniel Alejandro P.
19 years
L., Texas (E)

A: My name used to be Pottinger, but my father dropped the -ger. I don't know for what reason and I don't know that much about my father's background, you see. The only relations I know are the ones on my mother's side.

Q: Did your father leave your mother when you were a child?

A: Well, they got divorced, and we were four brothers, and he remarried, and I got a little halfsister now. And he got divorced again. So he's single now, and my ma, she just recently remarried. My mother was born in Houston but raised in Nuevo Laredo, actually Monterrey. And, you know, all throughout the years, she used to say that she had a fourth grade education, and now she reads English but doesn't know how to write it, and she understands it but doesn't know how to speak it.

Q: How old is one with a fourth grade education?

A: Nine years old. And, you know, she said that she had a fourth grade education, and everytime we'd go up to school and they'd ask us questions about our parents, I always said, "Fourth grade, fourth grade." And she said so that we wouldn't be ashamed, she said it's that. So later she said she didn't have no education at all. And all she did was learn by herself.

Q: Why do you think your father got divorced? Is he a difficult man to live with?

A: Well, yes he is. He's very stubborn, very stubborn, and he's got some weird ways. I don't know how to put it. I don't really know what caused the divorce, but my mom, she didn't know how to drink and my father, you know, taught her to drink. My father was always been self-employed. He still owns a restaurant, a bar and some courts. And he's a tightwad, tight with his money. And my mom would say, "Gimme some money for, you know, get some stuff for the children", and stuff. And sometimes he would and sometimes he wouldn't, and he'd go across the river - 'cause I live in a border town -' cross the river, go and spend the money on women over there, and I didn't know anything about it. My mom once told me that I was smart enough - I was in the second grade - that he slapped me and sent me to school with a bloody nose. And I myself don't even know anything about it, or hardly.

Q: When did your father leave the home? How old were you?

A: I think I was about seven.

Q: Which town were you born in?

A: I lived in L. all my life.

Q: And your family is still living there?

A: Well, my father's still living in L. My mom moved one hundred miles away to P., that's a small ranch town.

Q: Did your parents talk Spanish at home?

A: Well, at first, when they met, my father didn't know how to talk Spanish and my mom didn't know how to speak English. I don't know. I guess it was love at first sight. But ...

Q: What kind of background does your father have?

A: He's Anglo. Yes, he was born in the outskirts of Chicago and he came down. Well, he travelled through the United States, 'cause I think he said he didn't like the climate in Chicago. Came down with the railroad, and land, you know, at that time was cheap. Mexicans were there; he could get labor cheap, so, you know, it was ideal conditions. So I guess that's why he stayed there.

Q: And your mother was Mexican.

A: Yes, she was born in Houston. I don't know, 'cause my grandparents on her side were from Monterrey, and I don't know what they were doing in Houston, but she was born there, and they took her back to Monterrey, and that's where she lived. That's where she was raised.

Q: What language was spoken at your house?

A: Most of it was Spanish.

Q: Did you ever meet your grandparents?

A: I only met my granddad on my mother's side. His name was Emiliano Lugo.

Q: Then your first language was Spanish?

A: Yes. I learned English off and on with my dad and, you know, when I really started getting into it was when I started going to school.

Q: Did you as a kid like your dad?

A: Well, my mom always used to preach, you know, not to hate nobody, but sometimes I did feel resentment towards him, sometimes I didn't.

Q: Would you consider him rich, because he was self-employed?

A: Well, he is rich, but the thing is he doesn't advertise it. Like, some people got big fancy cars, great big cars. He believes, you know, money must be saved and saved, and doesn't spend it that much.

Q: How many brothers did you have?

A: With myself, we're four in my family. Four boys.

Q: What are they doing?

A: Well, I got two brothers in the service, and the one who isn't in the service is still going to high school. He's sixteen.

Q: Which member of your family do you feel closest to?

A: I like my brother, my other brother, the second one in the family. We're tight, and he got married when he was nineteen, you know, on the spur of the moment, with this Anglo chick, you know. She spoke mostly English; she didn't know how to speak Spanish. They got divorced about three months later, and then he joined the Army. And his best friend was married, and he met his best friend's wife's sister. So he married her, and now they have a little son, and I'm very proud of him.

Q: What experience was important for you before you joined the Army? Was there anybody whom you were impressed by?

A: There was this one teacher in high school. 'Cause my dad, you know, he'd say, "I'll pay your college, I'll pay your college. All you have to do is graduate, graduate." He stressed that. When this brother dropped out, then me and my other brother went on to graduate and there was this teacher, you know, in history and he talked to me and told me how it was, you know, and stuff, until we'd rap about the chicks.

Q: What kind of job do you want once you're out of the Army?

A: Well, I'm gonna go to college and try to be a dentist. That's my goal. That's my ambition.

Q: Do you think there are any differences between an Anglo family and a Mexican or Chicano family?

A: Yes, there's a whole bunch of differences. Like, well, what I've seen of the Anglo family, to me, you know, in my opinion, I don't think they take care of their children, just let them roaming and stuff. Back in a Mexican family a mother is always there with a belt, you know, discipline, discipline, a lot of discipline. There's some also who don't care. The food, that's one great big factor right there. I think the Mexican food's better, it's more healthy, I guess.

Q: Do you feel that Anglos are colder than Mexicans in their ways?

A: Well, yes. I think we do stick together. We do try to care about each other, try to help each other out. And I've seen some whites who don't even care, just let it pass.

Q: Did you have lots of contacts while you were a boy?

A: Why, yes. There's two schools in L. There's the Mexican school and then there's the white school, right? I went to the Mexican and I had plenty of friends over in the other one, that was in high school. And I used to go out with my buddies. We used to go drink, go mess around with their women, and stuff. That was pretty good, I had friends in that school, you know, a whole bunch of friends in the Mexican school.

Q: Were you accepted by both?

A: Yes.

Q: You never had any problem?

A: Well, sometimes I did.

Q: Could you tell me about this?

A: Well, like, I'd be in that other school and I'd be messing around with the women, and there were some guys that thought they were better than I was just because they were all white. And they did come and start and picking on us.

Q: What would they do and what would they say?

A: Well, they call us "dark good beaners", and stuff like that. And "wetbacks", "mojao", that's something that burns one up, "mojao".

Q: But you aren't actually dark.

A: No, I'm a "huero". I'm considered a "huero", "light skin", "white skin".

Q: But Anglos would still call you that?
A: Well, some of them, and some of them wouldn't. And I used to get into plenty of fights. We used to go to dances, and it would be the Mexican school against the white school: gangs.
Q: What were the reasons for fighting?
A: Well, sometimes we'd just get drunk, and, you know, some of our friends, they'd be with their girls, and stuff, and the other ones, the white ones, get jealous and start talking about them. And we don't like people talking about us. So we'd go out and what we'd do is fight.
Q: What did you fight with: knives, clubs, or just fists?
A: Well, we used a lot of rocks, boards. So it was a lot of physical contact.
Q: Was it usually just a matter of jealousy?
A: Jealousy, and people thinking they're superior to us.
Q: How would they show it?
A: They'd brush everything up, like, their nose up in the air a lot. If they were with a friend, and stuff, and you had one of your friends with you, women, right, and you'd go up and start talking to him, just go up there, and he'd hate you so much, he'd just leave. Or you ask him a question and he wouldn't even answer you.
Q: If somebody asked you, how do you identify - what are you, what would you say?
A: Well, my identity is a Chicano.
Q: Is there a difference between a Chicano and a Mexican?
A: Yes. Chicanos are Americans, yeah, Mexican Americans born in the United States. Mexicans are people born in Mexico.
Q: What do you think is important about being Chicano?
A: Well, I think we're a multi-cultured people, and the thing is, we don't have the opportunities to really go out and start doing things: help the people. We get put

down a lot. School was poor. Most of us are poor, so most can't go to college. That was one reason for joining the Army, 'cause I had to get money to go to college. And some of them just go along with the pace of life. They don't want to do anything. They say they can't.

Q: Do you think that Chicanos who speak only Spanish have a great disadvantage living in the United States?

A: Well, really, because English is greatly needed.

Q: Is your Spanish, your Mexican heritage, dear to you?

A: Yes, our customs are nice. They're really good. Well, weddings are fun, just fun. Everybody goes there, everybody has a bottle, a beer case, dancing; the was, the style of dancing, it's really fun. And for our kids, you know, small children, birthday parties with "piñatas".

Q: What are "piñatas"?

A: "Piñatas", it's a case, like a bull, a hollow bull, and you cut a hole in it and put lots of candies in it, stuff like that, and hang it up and blindfold the little kid and give him a little club and he swings it and trys to break the "piñata". And once it's broke, everybody jumps down and grabs the candy.

Q: Is your Spanish language dear to you?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: You don't want to give it up?

A: No.

Q: What do you think "La Raza" means?

A: "La Raza" is the Mexican people all together.

Q: Chicanos and Mexicans?

A: All the Spanish speaking.

Q: What else do you associate with "La Raza"?

A: "La Raza", that's also a political party, "La Raza Unida", back where I came from. It originated in Texas, you know. Part of it started in California also, 'cause there are a lot of Chicanos there who have lost their language. But it wasn't their fault, 'cause all they do is speak English over there. So, you know, if a guy got a name like García and he still doesn't speak Spanish, but he says, "I'm a Chicano also, even though I don't speak". I'm respecting it and I'm proud of it.

Q: Do you as a Chicano accept the mixed Spanish and Indian heritage? Would you reject the Indian part?

A: No, I like the Indian part. I consider the Indian part survival. Like you go through hard times and the little Indian keeps you going through many hardships.

Q: I'm giving you three names of Chicano leaders: Chávez, Tijerina, González.

A: I know Chávez. I have heard of Tijerina but I don't know that much of him. González is a senator I think.

Q: That's another González. I mean "Corky" González.

A: No.

Q: You know most about Chávez. What do you think of him?

A: He's pretty good. He first started the whole thing actually, helping for the cause of the mejicanos.

Q: Do you think he accomplished a lot?

A: Well, he made people see that we Mexicans are a culture. We are here and we don't like just being shooed off. We are here and we'll always be here. We want the same rights and respects as the other people do. That mostly we want them to accept our culture, our language. Like, we're over there and we're talking, right, just talking bullshit, and then some white comes over, "You're talkin' about me?" Wow, we don't even know who he is! And he thinks we're talking about him. And we're just bullshitting: talking about our "novias", and stuff.

Q: So, when somebody asks you what your nationality is, what do you say?

A: Well, my nationality is American, 'cause I was born in the United States. I can't say I'm from Mexico, 'cause I wasn't born in Mexico; I was born in the United States. And he says, "What do you relate to?" I says, "I'm a Chicano."

Q: What are the major problems for Chicanos today?

A: Well, jobs. They won't give them good jobs; they give them low jobs. They don't pay them enough and some of them don't really have that much education. Their English is poor, cuts them down. Their living conditions aren't too good. Like our city L., you'd figure it would have its streets paved and everything, because it got an international bridge on the gateway to Mexico. And the streets are unpaved, and in the high, white district the streets are all paved. The Chicano district: nothing.

Q: They don't live together? Are there two sections in the town?

A: Well, it's all together, right? But you got the heights and then you got just L. And the heights is where most of the white people live. And then we got a little suburb, but you know, just small.

Q: Are there a lot of intermarriages between Anglos and Chicanos?

A: Yes.

Q: What would your reaction be if your sister married a white, blond, Anglo-Saxon Protestant?

A: Personally I wouldn't mind, 'cause it's her that's getting married. I wouldn't resent the guy unless I did not like his beliefs or something, you know. He comes down and cuts me down; why should I respect him? He cuts me down.

Q: How close do you feel to Mexico?

A: Well, it's close, but it's freaky. 'Cause you go there, and we developed a slang in our city. We go and talk to the old Mexicans, and stuff. They don't consider us Mexicans; they consider us Americans, "gabachos."

Q: How far down have you been into Mexico?

A: I've been down to Monterrey, and that's it. My brother did go to the capital and said it was a beautiful city. And I certainly want to go. I want to visit a lot of places in Mexico.

Q: Do you think you know a lot about Mexico?

A: Well, no, I really don't know that much.

Q: Do you have any desire to learn more?

A: Yes.

Q: If you had the power to change anything in America, what would you change?

A: Well, first of all I'd try to make everybody, you know, have the same amount of money. I believe everybody should be what they are right now. I wouldn't make everybody Chicano; I wouldn't try to make everybody white or nothing. I believe that it's like they say: the United States is a melting pot. There are so many cultures and stuff. I'd just try and help everybody to be on a levelled basis. I'd try to get rid of some of the problems, not the people itself.

Q: What kind of problems?

A: I'd try to educate the people, you know. I'd try and help them and, you know, even in the United States we got starvation and stuff like that. Try and help everybody out.

Q: What about the big trusts, the big factories?

A: They wouldn't be; they couldn't exist. They would be the people's not the government's. Everybody would have a share in it.

Q: So, it would be more or less socialism?

A: Well, yes.

Q: Anything else that you'd like to change?

A: Well, the government itself. I wouldn't have any houses. I'd just have a People's Council. A People's Council and a branch to enforce things so that you get law and order. But one of the things I would try, I would try to get rid of greediness.

Q: So you're not very much in favor of capitalism as it is?

A: No.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: A good life for me is striving to work. I want to be a dentist, right? And if I happen to find a girl, the right girl: there really isn't no "right girl", you know, just a girl that can get along with me, you know, put up with my stubbornness, and stuff. /Laugh/ Have a nice family, about three or four.

Q: Where would you like to live: in a big city or in a small one?

A: No, I'd like to live in the country. I like hunting and fishing.

Q: What are the things you don't like in a big city?

A: I don't like all the pollution, all the smog. People are O.K., but I can't stand having too many people in one place.

Q: You were maintaining law and order a minute ago. Are you in favor of law and order?

A: Yes. Because there are some people, you know, who want to take everything for themselves.

Q: Do you think law and order in America has been used for or against the people?

A: Well, it's been, like, it's been tumbled around, you know. Sometimes for the people, but most of the time for its own purposes.

Q: What should be done in the big cities to increase safety in the streets?

A: Well, I wouldn't know, 'cause I never lived in a big city, but I guess the people itself. Recreation.

Q: What about education?

A: Yeah, education, recreation. Also other things. The police force itself's already been made, you know, supposedly to suit the people. I don't believe, really, the police force ought to be helped, 'cause the people cause the crimes. The police only come and get it.

Q: How do you want to raise your children? What are the qualities that you want them to know or to have?

A: Well, I want them to travel a little bit: education, travel. Education, teach them to respect themselves: culture: not to wanna be like everybody else, just be yourself.

Q: What about their relationship to you?

A: Well, love me, I guess /laugh/; 'cause, you know, once you get old, you're gonna need some help.

Q: What kind of a father would you like to be?

A: I'll be strict and also, like, they never allowed me to play football when I was small, and I didn't see any reason for it. So, I won't deny some things that I think are pleasures, and if they come up with something they think is good, well - I'll consider it and then let them do it for their own good.

Q: What do you think of Puerto Ricans?

A: They're pretty cool, I guess, but sometimes, the language, they speak it faster than the Mexicans do. And sometimes it's hard to understand.

Q: You find they're not different from Chicanos?

A: Well, yes, really. Some of the things are similar, but there's a whole bunch of differences.

Q: Do you get along with Puerto Ricans?
A: Yes.
Q: What's different then between the two groups?
A: Like I said, the way they speak it. Mostly the way they, you know, dress also. They dress more like, you know, Blacks if you ask me. And, you know, some of them, it's just like in every race, there are good ones and bad ones.
Q: Do you think America is a racist society?
A: Yes it is. White is right. you know. That is my opinion.
Q: What do you think should be done to abolish racism?
A: Education. And also, try and educate actually the parents. The parents are causing their ignorance.
Q: You think racism is due to ignorance, mostly?
A: Yes. Like, I myself, you know, before I came into the Army they used to tell me, usually Blacks, Blacks were this, Blacks were that. When I came in I expected that, you know, see them do it. I started rapping to some of them, now they're just like us. Pretty cool, I guess.
Q: What are the things or the values you would fight for?
A: Sometimes, like, when they put a white before you, because you're there. I had one recently. My name was written on the volleyball starting team, right? I went there and I said I want to play and they said, "No, no, we want the tall ones, we want the tall ones." Everybody out there was white except one Black.
Q: What other things?
A: My language. When they cut me down because I speak Spanish, that's one thing that's for sure. Our customs, our music. Like playing some nice songs and somebody comes up, "Turn off that shit", and stuff like that.
Q: What does the word "machismo" mean?

A: Well, I think it's "manly". And I think, you know, lot's of them think, "Pachucos" and stuff, you can kick anybody else, you know, you can kick as many dudes as you're a bad dude, and you know, that's something that influenced me a lot when I was small. 'Cause, you know, you had to fight your way through. I did a lot of fighting.

Q: Did you have anyone you could look up to?

A: Well, all I actually did was strive for that high school diploma. And so, you know, I put plenty of things aside as I was just striving to get my education.

Q: What else does "machismo" mean?

A: Well, I don't really know.

Q: What about women?

A: Well, making love, having children.

Q: Having many women, if possible?

A: To tell you one thing, I want every one I can get, you know. That's something, you know, you gotta do. Just human nature.

Q: I'd like to get back to "machismo" and women. What are the qualities you expect from your future wife?

A: I expect her to be good looking. Virginity, that's one thing, you know. Nowadays it's hard to find one. I found one but she's not ready to get married yet. So, if she really cares for me, and stuff, yes, we would marry. It doesn't matter that much to me. I know for some people it matters a lot.

Q: What are the qualities you want her to have?

A: Beauty. I want her to be good, you know, good looking. She ought to treat me like a man. She'd come over to me, hug me, kiss me, make love, not come over with excuses. Also, one thing, that's going out on a man. The woman - just stay home and take care of the kids.

Q: You don't want her to work a lot outside the house?

A: No, I don't want her to work, period. I want her to take care of my children and, you know, I know, I myself have desires for other women, and stuff, and I'll do it. To me it feels right, 'cause you go out, sometimes your wife's sick of something and you got, not really a mistress, but you just go out and have fun. And come back.

Q: You feel she should swallow that?

A: She shouldn't really know, but that's something, you know, that's inevitable if you ask me.

Q: You were saying that as a youth you were messing around a lot.

A: Yes, I used to get in trouble a lot with the police. With my friends, we also used to be wild, and stuff. And we didn't have a lot of things. We had a car, an old '62 Ford and we had to go rip off things for it. We'd rip off tires, 'cause we didn't have money. My mom would only get about fifty bucks a week and that wasn't really that much for food and stuff, electrical bills.

Q: Were you caught by the police?

A: Yes.

Q: More than once?

A: Yes. There was one time when I, we went out and met this chick; we went out and across the border to Mexico. We had two nights, we were drinking, came back and the police wanted to charge me with statutory rape and I was just gonna take her home, 'cause her car wouldn't start. That was one time when I was a juvenile. And another time.

Q: Did they put you in jail?

A: Well, in detention.

Q: How long?

A: Ah, I stayed there three days.

Q: Did your dad know about it?

A: Yes.

Q: Was he mad?

A: Yes.

Q: But he wouldn't throw you out of the house?

A: No, but he has thrown my little brother out. 'Cause my little brother is very rebellious. I have my own ideals, and stuff, and my old man starts talking and if I don't agree with him, I just won't fight it out with him. I'd just, you know, let him know about it, just don't stress the point. But my little brother will, and that's one thing that's different about us. He won't swallow anything.

Q: What kind of ideas did your father have that you didn't agree with?

A: Well, his religion.

Q: What kind of religion did he have?

A: I don't know. It's some freaky religion. Even my mother said, "Be careful", 'cause he used to supposedly mess around with the black arts,and stuff: the mystic, you know.

Q: Where did he go to in order to do that?

A: Well, he read a lot of books. He used to, you know, go out to Mexico. They got a lot of spiritualists: "brujas", "curanderos".

Q: Did he use it at home?

A: Well, I don't know. He says that this is one of the reasons they got divorced, because of that.

Q: Was your mother Catholic?

A: Yes, Roman Catholic.

Q: And you are too?

A: Yes, all of our family is.

Q: What other kind of trouble did you get into, apart from ripping things off?

A: Oh, I used to drink a lot. Drinking was, you know, we had fun. 'Cause my mom, my mom left, she left us and went to work in P., and my little brother living alone in L., going to school. And she'd send us money and came to visit us once in a while. The thing is, we were on our own and we, you know, we didn't wanna go to school, and stuff. But the idea of getting an education was important to us, so we went to school. And we used to drink a lot, go start fights.

Q: Did you smoke pot?

A: Yeah, marihuana, a lot.

Q: Did you get kicks out of it?

A: Yes, it's really a nice feeling, but, you know, that was back when I was fifteen, sixteen.

Q: Is that when you started?

A: Yes. You know, it was the only thing then. But now, now it just makes me drowsy and sleepy. And drinking, drinking I try to cut down; just drink socially.

Q: When did you have your first girl?

A: Well, that was about when I was sixteen. She was a chick from San Antonio. She came down and visited and, you know, she used to have sex a lot with a lot of friends of mine. And so one night we got together and it was pretty good. Yes, I had great fun. And after that I went down to a dance, went and drank six packs, smoked some pot, had some sex, then we went to a dance. It was really a great evening. /Laugh/

Q: Do you believe in dreams? Do you think dreams can prophesy anything?

A: Well, I myself have had a lot of dreams. They say that everybody has a little WP in their own mind, and I've had dreams and then don't pay them no mind, and then all of a sudden, you know, things just occur like that. Or like, if I dream, pretty soon I'm walking through this place and then, "Wow!", I just stop and look around and, "I've been here before", that's what I say. And, "This looks familiar, I'm supposed to do something." So I guess it does.

Q: I'm going to read the names of a few political leaders to you and you are going to pick one or two that you like most: Carmichael, King, Ché Guevara, Castro, Nixon, Kennedy, the "Young Lords", the "Black Muslims", César Châvez.

A: I take Ché Guevara and César Châvez. Also another one was Kennedy.

Q: Why do you like Guevara?

A: Ché Guevara is a revolutionary who was working for the people. That's why.

Q: And Châvez?

A: Châvez because he is also working for the people.

Q: And Kennedy?

A: Kennedy, well, I don't know if he would have been a good President or not, but all the Mexican people respected him. Everybody liked him. I'm talking about John F. Kennedy.

Q: Which institutions, or political groups, or parties do you think hurt minority members most?

A: I think they're really the Republicans.

Q: Which other forces in society?

A: Actually, the white Anglo-Saxon himself.

Q: I'll read a few off, maybe you can pick: state governments, the police, the Blacks, the churches, TV, the courts. Who do you think is anti-minority among them?

A: TV and the courts.

Q: In which sense TV?

A: TV, there's a lot of commercials. Before you'd never see a Black person on TV; you'd see lots of Mexicans. But they'd always have a big sombrero and a bottle of tequila. Always drunk, not knowing any English, ignorant, dirty. And there was always a white, always good, right.

Q: Do you think Blacks are an inferior race?

A: No, not really. They have, you know, we both have a lot in common, you know. We both have a lot of ignorance in our people and we have poverty; we're not rich. And then the ones that are, they call them "Uncle Toms" and we call them "Tio Tacos". Well, they think they're white.

Q: And you don't agree with that?

A: No.

Q: Even though you personally could pass for a white.

A: Yes, I know. One time we got in a discussion with this teacher. Her last name was Montoya. That was in high school, in English class. And we started talking. There was this town New Braunfels, and those people there are very prejudiced against Mexicans.

Q: Is that close to L.?

A: Well, it's not really that close, it's about three hundred miles away. And, you know, we started talking about "La Raza", and stuff. I didn't know that much, I never had been discriminated against that much. And then she was saying, you know, "Wait till you grow up and go out and go into a restaurant" and then they say, "Oof, sorry, we don't, you know, we got the right to refuse service to anybody."

Q: Do you feel that Blacks get too much support, that they move too fast?

A: Well, they do get more support than we do. And about moving too fast, sometimes they do and sometimes it isn't really right. But I guess that's what they feel is right.

Q: You feel that Chicanos should get more support now than Blacks?

A: Well, yes, 'cause we haven't had that much support in the old, in the back days. And, you know, we're not getting that much support nowadays.

Q: What does the term "Black Power" mean to you?

A: "Black Power" is just an identity.

Q: What else does it mean?

A: They're just striving for rights for themselves. It's like us, "Chicano Power". We're striving for us.

Q: Do you know what "Black Nationalism" is?

A: People from Africa, I guess.

Q: Are you in favor of Blacks forming a separate state in America?

A: No.

Q: Why?

A: Because it isn't right. Why should they be just all Black, that's prejudice right there.

Q: Let's talk about religion. You were saying that your faith is Roman Catholic. Do you still consider yourself a Catholic?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints?

A: Well, I don't know that much about Saints. I just know about "La Virgen". And there is one that, oh, he's a Black Saint, the one that comes out with a donkey most of the time, Simón de Porres.

Q: He's popular in your region? What does he do for you?

A: Yes. He's supposed to help you in times of trouble, help you with the food, you know, protect you.

Q: Do you believe that there is life after death?

A: Me? I don't know. I gotta die to find that out. /Laugh/

Well, not really, I don't really believe it. I believe it. Wow, I'm contradicting myself! I just got to find out for myself, that's all.

Q: Do you think that your sins will be punished?

A: Well, I don't think, you know, a person was born on earth to sin since they opened that box of Pandora's, 'cause everybody came out there. And that's why you pray to God to be forgiven.

Q: Do you pray?

A: Yes. I don't go to church though. You know, I do at home.

Q: Do you think messing around with women is a sin?

A: No.

Q: Why?

A: 'Cause I myself believe that after you have fun and that old stuff with us was way back, for the old days.

Q: Which old stuff?

A: Well, not having any sex: that you should be pure. It's nice to be pure but it's also not really that good. It'd be said you're old fashioned.

Q: And you enjoy it?

A: Yes, oh yeah! /Laugh/

Q: What about superstitions? Are you superstitious?

A: Yes, very superstitious.

Q: What superstitions do you believe in?

A: Well, the Devil can come up and appear.

Q: In which shape?

A: In any shape you want. There's one superstition. You know, we got this bridge, it's called Chacón Bridge. And a teacher was making a survey, you know, studying, 'cause she had to do it for a degree. And there was one time this old man was walking down the street; he just got out of work, twelve midnight, walking down and he was walking over this bridge, Chacón Bridge, and he heard this little baby crying. And then he went down and looked at the baby, and all of a sudden flames bursted in his face and it was the Devil - this hideous laugh! And he ran home and he came back the next day and he found the blanket all burnt, and stuff.

Q: Who told you this?

A: That was an English teacher. And her name was Miss Montemayor. Also, you know, my mother, she is very superstitious. The Evil Eye. She claims, I had an older brother, right, but he died. She said they came in and, you know, looked at him and gave him the evil eye. He died.

Q: Who did she think it was?

A: One of her friends. That she was jealous. Also, another, they got this little weed. I don't know, it looks like the flower chisme. And it's green, and one day I went back out there and I saw it. And I said, "Hey, Mom, what's this?" And she looked at it and said, "Don't touch it, don't touch it, grab some sticks or something, but don't touch it with your hands." I grabbed it and threw it off. Then she'd go and get some holy water, 'cause she always had some holy water. She always got it in the corner of the house full of saints, candles. And then she went, made the sign of the cross with the holy water. And then she told me that my older brother, his name is Ray; one time the same thing was done, you know, they did the same thing to her, and he went and grabbed it, and he almost died. He got sick and almost dies.

Q: Did your father agree with these beliefs?

A: Well, my father never knew about them, 'cause, you know, he wasn't living with us.

Q: What else can you tell us about superstitions? Do you believe in "curanderos"?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you also think that there are witches that can harm you?

A: Yes. I myself had a girl friend. I broke up that one night with her, ended up in jail.

Q: Why?

A: I think she put a fix on her or something. Because, you know, my mom one time, she said, "I'm being bothered". Sometimes I'm getting too much bad luck and she starts doing, you know. I right now have some Saints and stuff in my pocket and I also have this. Ever since I wore this. /A leather band/

Q: What is it?

A: I consider it as a protection for me.

Q: Who made it?

A: I did it. I prayed and then put it on. And so far nothing really bad has happened to me.

Q: Why were you put in jail then?

A: 'Cause that was the time we were ripping off the tires. But, you know, the thing is, I was there and, you know, I told her to break up, "I love you, but it's not workin' out." So I'd say, "Give me one last kiss for a goodbye." And she said, "No, no." And then I grabbed her hand and I squeezed it, and then she said, "O.K." And then, you know, got a last kiss, and then after that, went, and took her home. And then, riding around with my buddies, and stuff, and that's when everything started happening.

Q: So you think she put a spell on you?

A: Yes. 'Cause she has a power, you know. Either she didn't want to but I guess in her mind she said, "Something bad happens to him." So that's why it came about.

Q: Do you think progress has been made against racism?

A: Yes, a lot. People have been helped. Blacks have been helped and Indians are being helped.

Q: Who helps the most?

A: Actually, it's themselves helping them, and then the other minorities helping the minorities themselves.

Q: Have you ever talked to Indians?

A: Me? Yes. They feel, you know, like they were cheated, you know, all throughout their history.

Q: How were they cheated?

A: Well, cowboys just came and took their land. Just took it.

3. Chicano Student Group

Tito G., C.C., Texas, 27 years, married to
Pita G., K., Texas, 27 years
Cristóbal L., C.C., Texas, 28 years, married to
Gilda L., C.C., Texas, 27 years
Estêban S., W., Texas, 29 years
Joe L., J., Texas, 21 years.

(E, S, except Gilda who used English only)

Q: When you were children and adolescents, were your friends Anglos or Chicanos, or did you have both? And did you notice differences between the two groups?

A: Tito: When I grew up in my small town, in general Blacks and Mexicans were together, and every now and then we had friends in school that were "gringos". But the difference could be noticed from the beginning, because I remember as a small child I wanted to join the "Cub Scouts" and they didn't allow Mexicans or Blacks there. So we knew from the very beginning that there was a difference.

Estêban: Where I lived almost all my life there were no Blacks, I think there were two families. And the majority were Mexican American. There were about 15 per cent Anglos. And there is a difference, in a very real way: in this place were railroad tracks which practically divided the Mexican Americans on one side from the Anglos on the other side. And so a Mexican American can go to school and not know the Anglos until he gets to be seven or eight. At this point everybody goes to the same school, and it was then that I really began to know more Anglos.

Joe: Well, the same thing occurred in my small town also for the simple reason that there is also a separation by railroad tracks. But the separation divides not only the "gringos" from the Chicano, but also the Chicano from the Blacks. They are three groups and three conglomerations of races with different ideas. As for the economical situation the "gringos" are higher up than any of the other races. And during my first school years, well, my father always tried to make it possible for me to learn English, and finally it amounted to that I knew English more or less well when I started school. But the school I went to consisted almost completely of Chicanos, and I went there up to the level of junior high. And as the proverb goes: "East and West, and never the twain shall meet."

Pita: As I said before, I'm from K. and there the population is about, as it's small, about 40 per cent Chicanos, 10 per cent Blacks and 50 per cent Anglo-Saxons. And there is no mixing. In school we always sat together and away from the others.

Q: Why?

A: There was never a confrontation, it was like an understanding, as if one didn't know where one was welcome and where one wasn't. And also, you knew that you couldn't have "gringo" friends, well, you couldn't trust them. Another thing was you were considered a traitor. Yes, because I was bused to school because I lived in the country and, say, in the school bus the Anglo-Saxons sat in front, the Chicanos in the middle and the Blacks in the back.

Q: What year was that?

A: Well, this was in 1960.

Q: Has that changed now?

A: Yes, now it has.

Cristóbal: I am of a family that originally came from Spain; we always talked Spanish at home. And I remember that I didn't speak English when I started school; I learned English little by little. But I also had the great luck to attend a Catholic school during all my school years. And I think the reason why I attended the Catholic school all the time was, because my father knew from his childhood the many details with which one would be confronted at school, and therefore sent me to a private school. But we all knew what the situation was between the Mexican American, the Chicano, and the "gringo". Because we learned from the childhood of my father: he told us the stories of discrimination which he had lived through.

Q: Did you yourself find discrimination in that school?

A: Not in the Catholic school. Well, I don't think so, the majority of those who attended the Catholic school were Chicanos. This is why I really didn't have any contact with the "gringos" except outside school. But at school always the majority were Chicanos. I came into contact with Anglos when I entered high school.

Q: And how was this?

A: When I arrived at C. C. in the eighth grade I got enrolled in the seminary which is situated in St. Louis, Missouri. But then there is, I think, a lot of difference between the "gringos" of Missouri and the "gringos" in Texas, in the way they discriminate against Mexican Americans. Because I think in the Midwest they don't know so much about the Chicano and therefore discrimination is lacking. The prejudice they have is against Blacks or against the Jews in that region. And I learned mainly about discrimination from my dad, from the stories which he told me.

Gilda: When I was little we spoke English at the house, so I never learned Spanish very well, until just now I'm picking it up. So we spoke English all the time, my parents spoke English, and I went to the Catholic School most the time. The Catholic school that I attended was mostly Anglo with some Mexican. We were a counterpart to Christi's Mexican school, and so we mixed very well, the Anglo people and the Mexican people. And eventually there were some Black people also. But I never knew about discrimination until way after

I got into college. I was never confronted with it. I guess I was always in situations where I was always protected from it. So I never knew what some of my people were going through. So I was never sympathetic to the cause either, because I just didn't know any better.

Q: Why did your parents talk English?

A: I think to save me from the hardships that would come if I went to school speaking Spanish. To save me from this suffering, I think, is their reasoning they spoke to me in English.

Q: They knew Spanish, though.

A: Oh yes, but they spoke Spanish only to themselves, among themselves, you know. I guess, my brothers and sisters, we were never spoken to in Spanish, it was always English.

Q: Did you later on resent this attitude of your parents?

A: No, I did not.

Q: You are happy, knowing English very well.

A: Yes.

Q: When did your parents come to the States?

Tito: Both of my parents were born in this country. There is a kind of a difference, it's hard to explain, and I think part of it might be explained by the feelings of inferiority that they were made to feel in growing up. On my dad's side there seems to be some kind of pride in the fact that even my grandparents were born in this country. I haven't gotten into how far back family history goes, but I do know that they have been here a long time. They're living in occupied Mexico in a sense, because Texas was Mexico at one time. The other side is on my mother's side, where both of the grandparents did come from Mexico, from the northern part. But there is a funny dynamic that's taking place, and that is that a great-great-grandfather of mine was supposed to have been a Spaniard and was given a land grant by the King of Spain in a town called González, Texas. And there seems to be a kind of pride in being able to point at something that is non-Indian in terms of background. And I can remember things like my grandmother talking about a couple, a boy and a girl. And she might say, "Well, you know, that boyfriend is dark, but he's a good boy." There was that kind of thing happening. But even then there was a conflicting feeling, they took very much pride in the fact that they were Mexicans, and odd kind of situation, you know.

Q: Did your parents talk Spanish at home?

A: They did when I was growing up, but now, I can see in terms of descending order what greater difficulty it is in being able to speak Spanish in my home. My two little sisters I think can understand it, but I know that they can't speak it. I think it was, because when my parents speak to each other, they always speak in Spanish. I was always getting spoken to in Spanish at home until later years.

Q: Are you the first one to go to college in your family?

A: Yes.

Estéban: I was born in Mexico, just south of the border, but I was raised further inland. We moved to this country in 1950. My father died in 1950, so we were just three of us, my brother and I were very young. To my mother, because of the economical situation, it looked more promising to come to this country. We moved in 1950 and worked, did some field work for a while, and then settled down where we are now, in W. It's close to Brownsville, it's in the very tip of Texas.

Q: Did your mother remarry?

A: No, she never did. As far as language, we always spoke Spanish.

Q: Would you consider it your native language?
A: Yes. Right, it's much more common being in an area where it's so predominant, you know, English is kind of a second language.
Joe: My parents themselves have always spoken Spanish in the home, always. That's almost without exception. Now, my dad who is the more fluent of the two as far as the English language is concerned, used to talk to me both in Spanish and in English. That's basically what happened. They were both born here in Texas, both of them.
Q: Did your grandparents immigrate from Mexico?
A: Yes.
Q: You would consider Spanish your first language?
A: Oh, yeah. I'm more at home with Spanish. Not the standard Spanish, of course, it's "pocho".
Q: Is "pocho" a negative term for you?
A: I think it's a positive term for me.
Q: But suppose an Anglo or a Mexican says it about you, is it negative?
A: It is negative.
Q: Is it like with the term "Chicano", which was once a negative term and now is a positive one?
A: Yes. There is a reassessment of values, there has to be.
Q: How different is Texas Spanish from Mexican Spanish?
A: Well, you must realize that when I say the dialect I'm not referring to the Spanish that is spoken exclusively by my age group, by people in the forties or over, or by people who are old, very old. You know, it is not one Chicano dialect, it is a conglomeration of several Chicano dialects. Now, in this sense I feel that this is the way the Chicano language is right now.
Q: Are there English words mixed in?
A: Yes, but there again, this exists mainly within my age group and within, say, people in their forties up to perhaps

their fifties. After, beyond that, there is a very marked difference in the vocabulary.

Pita: My parents were both born in south Texas. My grandparents were from Mexico.

Q: Did they live with you?

A: No, but very close. It's like, we saw them, like, three or four times a week, you know. I mean every day we stopped on the way home and on the way back, you know.

Q: What was the language spoken at home?

A: Spanish. Well, like, when I first entered school, one of the first questions they would ask the mother, like, especially Mexican mothers, "Well, do they speak English or Spanish?" And my mother was really honest, you know, and she said, "Oh, she speaks Spanish," you know. And so when I went to school, like, what they did, like, they had a grade zero for Mexicans! /Laugh/ So if you didn't know how to speak English, you know, or if your mother was really honest, you know, they would put you in grade zero. And I got out of that and we moved to another nearby town, and the teacher finally talked to my mother and said, "Well, I don't know what's the matter with her. She can do the work, but she doesn't want to speak English. But I'll go ahead and move her up so she won't lose that year." But a lot of Chicanos lose, or used to anyway, you know, lose a year of school; because of that they go thirteen instead of the usual twelve years.

Cristóbal: My maternal grandparents, one is from the United States, my grandmother is from K., where I am from, and my maternal grandfather is from Matamoros, Mexico. And my paternal grandparents are both from Mexico, from Sur El Trevín, they immigrated to Realitos. And the principal language at home as far as I remember, was always Spanish. When I went to school I didn't speak any English.

Q: How did you react to that change, were you confused, were you angry?

A: Well, no, as I consider myself fortunate enough to have attended a parochial school I think there was a great deal of charity among the sisters. And as they had no program implemented for teaching English, they understood the difficulty, I mean, this language difficulty, and so they sort of cushioned the impact, because the nuns spoke Spanish, even though they were Anglo nuns. They spoke to us in Spanish and they sort of cushioned the blow. And I remember my first-grade teacher was not a nun, but a Chicana. And when we didn't understand something she would tell us in Spanish. It really softened the tensions and was more conducive to learning, and consequently our English improved quite rapidly within the first year.

Gilda: My parents were born in Texas, my grandparents were from here too. And I think my great-grandparents were from here too. So once, maybe on my father's side, my great-grandparents, one of them may have been from Mexico. But I think we go back two generations already here. At home the language spoken was English.

Q: What makes a Chicano a Chicano?

Tito: It's a difficult question to answer, because there are so many directions that a person can come at it from. For some people, myself included, calling myself a Chicano is like calling oneself a Mexican, an American, a Briton, a German. For others, Chicano takes on political connotations that I don't necessarily impute. Now, of course, if you tie the common use of the word "Chicano" to the political activity that began in the late '60's, then in a sense it does have a political connotation.

Q: Would you say that people who call themselves Mexican Americans today are more leaning towards assimilation than a person who calls himself a Chicano?

A: Well, I don't know. That's a tough one too, because it's also hard to know where assimilation begins and where it stops. And the very fact that you and I now communicate in English, and the fact that all the people that are congregated in this room right now, are in Cambridge, Mass., points to a certain degree of assimilation that other people haven't gotten into. Yet we call ourselves Chicanos. I don't think it's that easy any more. At some time there was a great sensitivity about the labels - it wasn't that long ago, as a matter of fact. /Laugh/ Late sixties, early seventies I would guess, and I feel fairly safe in it. There may be some disagreement here with the group, but I would guess if there is a Chicano still who persists on being called "Spanish surnamed" or "Latin American", that says more directly that that person wants to become as Anglo soon as possible. Whereas a person identifying himself as a Mexican American doesn't strike me that way any more. It depends, you know, I'm a Mexican American, and I'm a Chicano.
Q: Now, again, is there something like a "chicanidad"? Is there something very specific of a Chicano living in the U.S. that is very peculiar to that group?
A: That's a tough one, too. Well, you see, many of us are in this country not by choice. Of course, we can exercise the option to leave, but it's not as easy as that either, because our roots are so deep in what is now called the United States, because we grew up here, our relatives, our parents are here, and so on. It wouldn't be too difficult to point to the phenomenon by saying, "Listen, there are people living in this country who can point to their national origin and that national origin is Mexico." Maybe this will help, but the rise of political movements concerned for the maintenance of culture and the use of the word "Chicano" I think can at least point to a distinction. It may have to

do something with the periods in which people grew up, because, I mean, we can go into restaurants now where my dad couldn't. We can walk on sidewalks now, instead of out on the streets, what my grandfather used to have to do. But even then, I think there is a difference; we're talking now about the importance of keeping Spanish as a language, maintaining the use of the language, the customs, and not forgetting who we are; knowing that we are not "gabachos", that we will never be "gabachos", and understanding also, that as much as we want to make ourselves into "gabachos", we would be turning against our culture and our roots.

Q: Do you admit the mixture in Chicano culture?

A: Yes.

Q: You don't mind, for example, the Indian part of it?

A: Oh no! How can it bother me if it happens that I am more Indian than anything! /Laugh/

Q: What makes you a Chicano? Is there a thing like a "chicanidad"?

Estéban: Well, let's see. First, you know, when I started to hear the term "Chicano group" frequently at the university we were sort of in search of a name, so to speak. I can't say very well at the university that I am "Mexican" because it doesn't sound right, the same goes for "American". At times "Mexican American" does sound right. And when the word "Chicano" came out it sounded good, so to speak. It sounded like something that makes us a little proud to say that word. Today I heard how other friends said, "Listen, you, Mexican, come here!" And the mere tone of it now didn't sound good. Ah, yes, the word "Chicano", sounded as if it had a bit of pride in it. I don't think you could write this to another person, because it is a personal matter. Perhaps after this I really started to learn about the idea of Aztlân, the idea that we are really a group apart, neither here nor there, but nevertheless a different group. But this came after the term "Chicano" had been accepted. And then it was strange, and Tito may not agree very much with this, but after we had already been in the movement, I had to go to many schools to ask the boys, the youths, and this was a short time ago, like three, four years, to ask them, "What would you like to be called?" And very few said "Chicano", and I gave them this option, "Mexican American", or any other word. They didn't like the term or they didn't know it. These were high school students and a vast number of them. And I find it more common with adults, when I talk with my uncles and people like them, they don't like the word "Chicano", it sounds bad to them.

Q: What do they like, then?

A: I think "Mexican", perhaps "Mexican American", but for the majority it's "Mexican", nothing else. "Chicano" alone they don't like.

Q: What is special or typical for a Chicano or a Mexican American? What makes him different from an Anglo or an Indian?

A: Ah, well, we are perhaps at a point of transition, and not in a transition from Mexicans to Americans but from Mexicans to something new.

Joe: This may sound like a cop-out, but it really isn't. I believe this very much. There is one word with which I can answer every one of your questions which you have asked so far - and this is pluralism. I think that there is the whole idea of the Chicano, and in this point I have to contradict Tito here. The same opinion is held by Dr. Octavio Romano, that is that "chicanismo" is not one thing but a variety of things, including the person which negates his or her whole culture, language, the traditions. Everything amounts to the same thing, even if he negates it he remains Chicano, even if he negates it. Often he lives it voluntarily, because he chooses so, because there are many who associate the word "Mexican American" with something lower. And in this sense I think that there are different manifestations of "chicanismo". It shows in itself that we are proud of our culture, and in the many times that we left the system. There are several, like, for example, Reies Tijerina who has left completely or who wants to leave completely the American system. And there are other persons who, well, the technical term used among the folklorists is "realigned pluralism", which means, like the LULAGS, and various organizations who work within the North American culture. There are also the "vendidos", like I just said, those who deny their culture, those who deny their origin. I think that the "chicanismo" is now at this stage.

Pita: Up to a certain point I agree with the idea of "chicanismo". I want to say that we have lost almost all our culture. I believe that for this reason we have accepted this term because we are neither Mexicans nor Anglo-Saxons.

Q: What should be done?

A: Search our roots. I think that in one way or another we have to stop, as we way, to stop buying into the system. Already I'm not buying Ford; perhaps I shouldn't study at Harvard! [Laugh]

Q: Should you travel on a donkey's back? Which alternatives do you have?

A: Perhaps to work more together among ourselves.

Q: Can you avoid -

A: I don't think I can avoid but [we can], as we say, minimize the influence of the system.

Cristóbal: I quite agree with many of the reasons that were given so far. [Laugh] I think all have very good ideas. The question is about "chicanismo". Well, "chicanismo" for me is, as I see it, the native people of Aztlán.

Q: What is Aztlán?

A: The native people from there. /Laugh/ The Southwest region of the Southwest of the U.S. I think the term "Chicano" came into being with the "pachuco". The "pachuco" is, I think, "the existential man", the one who originally said, "This I'm not, nor that." His parents were Mexican immigrants in many cases, and they realized that they were not "gringos", they were not Americans but Mexican Americans.

Q: Is this term "pachuco" still used or was it just a phase?

A: It isn't used any longer and in many cases it has become a disagreeable term. "Pachuco" is like "hood" in English. But in those days it was an ideal. They were youths who could deal with the two systems, the North American and the Mexican system, and who could affirm their identity, and this identity was the "chicanismo". It was an entity separate from the others and this means: we must not in the progress of our movement insist on the negative aspects among ourselves. I think, for instance, that there are many different opinions on what we choose to call ourselves: Chicano, Mexican, Mexican American. We must not make this division but rather say that we are one people and that we have to cooperate with each other to one end, an end for everybody. And we should let a Chicano say what he wants to call himself - in the last analysis he is a Chicano.

Q: Does the term "Chicano" imply for you Mexican, Spanish, Indian, Anglo-Saxon culture?

A: No, I want to see a return to the indigenous, a stress on the indigenous, on the indigenous culture.

Q: Of which elements is "the indigenous culture" composed?

A: It is a combination of all the elements that you mentioned. A mixture of the indigenous and of everything that is positive in it, the Spanish, to a certain degree the Anglo, because it will be inevitable. But I believe that we have to form our own community, our Chicano community, and stress this culture which has matured to a certain point. And we must return to studying our forefathers and learn what has been forgotten during the years. We have to learn the indigenous, the Spanish, the mixture of races, the "mestizaje", which is what all of us are.

Gilda: I really don't know what to say.

Q: Would you call yourself a Chicana or would you call yourself a Texan girl?

A: I think now I should say I'm a Chicana. /Laugh/ I never thought of myself as a Chicana, I always had this, I never thought of myself as anything, just American. But then I started getting brainwashed little by little, you know, after I had married Chris. He started me realizing all these things I had missed out on, you know. So, but, you know, we had hard discussions on this, and I never found myself as Mexican, probably because I never experienced a lot of the prejudice that existed in town. I was protected from it. It was there in town but I was protected from it, so I never, I don't know, it's kind of embarrassing now that I'm old enough to know better. But I don't blame my parents for protecting me, because they had their reasons for doing it. But now that I know a little bit more I tend to, I don't know, to want to learn more. Like, my Spanish is getting a lot better, you know, embarrassing as it is.

Q: Do you want to raise your children bilingually?

A: Definitely bilingually and biculturally; teaching them, letting them know some of the traditions my ancestors had.

Cristóbal: I think there has been a great effort from our parents to protect us from something that is really hideous within our society. And they have had to pay a dear price, and that is, to sacrifice their own culture in many instances and to sacrifice our language. And I always put the question to myself, "Do we need to pay the price in order to attain some material progress, some attainment within the system?" And I definitely say, "No".

Gilda: You don't need to, but you have to.

Estéban: I was thinking as you were talking of the fact, you know, the fact that we need to learn the culture of the Aztecs, the mestizo culture. But at the same time I see a lot of people that want to learn, or want to develop a culture that is from this side, you know what I mean? Mexican American people are writing or hoping to develop a culture, I don't know.

Cristóbal: But I think that is part of it as well. I think there must be a conglomeration of it all. I don't think that we can simply start from "chicanismo" as it's now. Of course that is part of it, we have to write about it but we also have to see what has brought us to this point. What has the ancestor background been to this point, that would give us the insight, the folkloric insight to be able to put forward something in a particular way? What are the terms that we use, why do we use certain terms to call certain things, even title of books? I think it all has to be examined, I would not prescind or leave any part of it out.

Q: What does Mexico mean to you? Is it a tourist place, or your spiritual homeland, or a country from which poor greasers immigrate and take away jobs? Do you think America is basically a racist society?

Tito: I have a definite response to both questions. In my response to your first question, I really have to be careful with myself to find out, if I'm not overly romanticizing. Not being all that familiar with Mexico except with the border, for me it takes on the meaning of something that's close to the spiritual homeland and I know that Pita and I have talked about wanting to live there, to go for a while to see what it's like. Because, you know, it could be that my investments are where they've always been, and that is in Texas and the United States. Pita has also been very careful in pointing out that if we go there, I'm not coming there with the same kind of baggage other people have. Because I wouldn't profess to be as fluent in my Spanish as people are any place in Mexico. It's certainly not a place where greasers come to take away jobs. I mean, I just reject that whole notion. And that's a nice tie into your next question. I do think the United States is a racist society. It's, I mean, it's hard for me to talk about intelligence being hereditary, but it's almost as if in the United States people have marketed, cornered the market in making racism a genetic factor. But, like I say, I may be over-reacting in this thing. If you look at the history of the United States, the most recent example is right here in Boston. People talk about the concern for quality education when they discuss the busing issue, but after school hours Blacks cannot go into certain areas of town unless they're crazy enough to risk their life walking down the street with no protection whatsoever. Last year a group of Chicano students, a Mariachi group, went to play in a church and when we came out there was a group of about fifteen to twenty youths, who had tires, wrenches, shovels, chains. That was in Jamaica Plain, but the folks who were there weren't Puerto Rican or Black, they were white. So, you know, I really do think that this country is basically a racist country. It operates from the notion that it's superior to everything that ever existed here. All you have to do is to read the editorials and people are constantly praising the fact that the United States is God's gift to humanity, in the form of government.

Estéban: Mexico is a very special place for me. I can say, as did Tito, it is a special spiritual place. Also in reality, because my relations live there, my uncles, my grandfathers, they are all in Mexico. So it is for me a place of return to which I travel frequently.

Q: Do you feel more at home here than in Mexico?

A: I feel very much at ease there also and I feel very, very, very well even in the poorest places in Mexico, because there is a sense of friendship which perhaps may not be typical for Mexico but typical for people who live outside the city, out in the open, not in very urban places. It means very sincere friendship in which there is no double meaning, ah, I think it is very, very special. I myself haven't seen so many cases of racism to say that the U.S. is a racist country as a whole, but I do consider it a racist country. Racist in its totality, in its governmental system as the ideas reach it through the bureaucracy.

Q: What do you consider the basis of American racism?

A: Well, looking at jobs in the first place, looking at the Mexican American people, it does not move with its job possibilities, and this is general. Those persons who will really say that yes, they rose to a much higher level, are exceptions. There is no interest here in help from the majority. You cannot trust the government, let's say, when it presents a matter to me, if it does so for my own good. In the business world it is always a very common thing, let's say, that there is another meaning, another, deeper matter, than what you see on the surface. If a person tells me, "I give you this", I have to think, "Why?" There must be a deeper reason. And this I have seen from many different angles. As regards many personalities, it is already different.

I have had to work with many persons, Anglos, small groups, who have acted in a much better way. In many cases I did not see this racism in such a natural way. But, in general, yes, I feel it.

Joe: Personally, I don't consider Mexico my spiritual homeland, because generally I don't feel any special link with Mexico. What I want to say is that I don't look for Mexico nor the U.S., but for Aztlán.

Q: What is Aztlán for you, mythology?

A: No, Aztlán is not mythology, it is a very real thing. As I just said, "The Great Southwest", this is the translation of the word, and I think that I can find my identity more easily with the indigenous culture even if I don't teach it. But I am a mixture, as Chris said, of the indigenous and the European. But my origins, and above all my emotions, are in Aztlán. That is why, most of the time when I refer to myself. I don't say that I am Mexican American but that I am Chicano, because the word comes from there.

Q: Could you give me a detail or two of what you appreciate in Aztlán? Because it seems to me very easy to speak of Aztlán as an abstraction.

A: Well, yes, it is very easy to talk of Aztlán as an abstraction. But let's go back again to our original argument of Aztlán, its evolution and its present state. It is pluralism of colors as you see here, a pluralism of ideas, of thought. And when I refer to the proverb "Different strokes for different folks", it is quite true. In the course of time we have seen different movements here in "The Great Southwest", as we say. All of them are manifestations of an evolutionary process of Aztlán. To answer your question, I would like to say that this is not a matter that can be answered, like, if you asked me about the government of the

U.S. or of Mexico. Aztlán has held for me various meanings, I have seen it in different phenomena, like, well, let's see, something more concrete. For instance, the Mexican Revolution had various heroes, who are, of course, not considered in the least heroes within the American culture, within American ideology, men like Gregorio Cortez, like Pancho Villa, like, an infinite number, Zapata, for example, many heroes who had their place and had their work to do during that period of Aztlán. And looking further back, we can go to indigenous figures like - what is his name, this person, that Indian - Cautémoc who is also considered a hero.

Q: What does Mexico mean to Guadalupe?

Pita: Mexico is something special to me. I think this country, [the U.S.], is racist. That's all.

Q: In which sense is it special? Is it your real homeland?

A: I feel something for the country, well, something special or sentimental; when I hear a Mexican song I am moved. I like the sense of friendship, or this friendliness, which I find in the Mexican people, the courtesy. I don't know, it is sentimental, but this is what I feel.

Cristóbal: I feel a lot of affection for Mexico culturally, with its language, with all its aspects. I spent the summers there when I was attending seminary up north. And I feel in Mexico something like a separation is what we suffer, a separation from our country. And here we have to use diff definitions; it is unpractical to think that some day we will be able to return to Mexico, to take away the bord For the time being we have to learn what I said before know the history of Mexico, and establish in a concre Aztlán with its Mexican indigenous culture. We must which is our past and establish it practically in T

Q: And American society?

A: You asked earlier what the basis for racism was, and I think, as I see it, it may be because the U.S. wants to be monogamous, wants that share, the same feeling, this meeting pot: everybody has to have this ideal of Anglo-Saxon blue eyes. And I do feel that racism stems from this. Any color that differs from the ideal, the white, suffers discrimination from those who have had this ideal of being white in America.

Q: Do you feel that the basis for this is Anglo-Saxon economical power?

A: Yes, and also this aspect of having to keep some working force potential.

Gilda: Mexico is a place that we always went to when we were little. At least once a month we'd go, you know. We were always, we always liked Mexico, but I don't know which kind of attachment I had. It was something that was part of our tradition, you know. You just went to Mexico. It was so close. I don't know that I had any real attachment to the place as such. I wouldn't want to go and live there, definitely not. I enjoy being there, visiting.

I think the U.S. is a racist country. It has discriminated against any race that was not Anglo-Saxon. Any group that has tried to keep its tradition, to keep its culture together.

Q: What would you change in America if you had the power? Do you think that Chicanos as a people are ready now or will be ready in the future for a revolution in the Southwest?

Tito: Don't think that we don't have a lot of power in a lot of senses. I believe very much in education, that people should get educated academically, professionally, philosophically, whatever. And for several generations they have kept the Mexican way down in the schools - we already talked of the time when Mexicans started school at grade zero instead of first grade. And I came to college with the hope, well, one of the hopes was to open doors. So in one sense I'm saying that there are many things that have to be done, but I, as an individual, will never, never have the power to change things radically. This is why I say I prefer to better the people using the system as it exists now. I'm referring not only to monetary matters, but also to the fact that the people receive an education. This is something that they can never take away from us. If they take our money, houses, whatever: at least we have something within ourselves.

Q: Do you know or recognize the danger of an "Anglo-Saxon education"?

Tito: Yes, it is a great danger, because we Chicano students at Harvard represent a very, very small section of the Chicano population, and it is very easy for the Anglo-Saxons to pick us as special people and to give us jobs and to tell us, "You are good, you're not like the rest. Here are some jobs, and all." And also in the sense that we are recruiting Chicanos for Harvard it can be that we suffer from the problem, that as we try to better the people by bringing people here to study, we are sending them to different places where the Chicano does not exist. But this is like a religion for me. I think this is something very important, because, well, I think my dad got to fifth grade, my ma to fourth grade. They can hardly read or write, I mean, now they can. They graduated from secondary school with a special program, and I was so proud when I saw this. We already said that in general, we also are the first ones to have gone to college. So what I want to do when I return is to see if my wife and I can do to better in the community on the monetary level, on the socio-economical level. But also to open the doors to academia for children who before did not have these opportunities. Oh yes, that we are now living a revolution, yes, but I'm referring to a revolution in which no arms are being used. I'm referring to the revolution that we're having right now, the academic revolution, a professional revolution, also a cultural revolution. We are now researching where we came from, what our roots are. To say that the people is ready or not does not mean much to me because it is already happening. No, I don't think an armed revolution would serve us, I don't even think that it would be possible.

Estéban: As to the first question, well, progress, educational betterment seem to me easier, and I'd like to influence the economic betterment of the intelligent people, because the educated Mexican before, what they did when they wrote, they were in reality addressing themselves to Anglo-Saxon society, to the upper class, "This is how Mexicans are, stop telling us how we should be in order to progress better." And now I see something different, that now we're not addressing ourselves so much to that class but to the Mexicans themselves. We tell them, "We can do this, we can have a better education." I have seen too many cases of students who had simply no desire to continue and go ahead, and I don't think that this is a thing that comes naturally in a person but that it rather stems from the experience which one had on the way. That they saw that it is difficult, for example, to make it to a doctoral degree; it is very expensive, you know. As to our preparing a revolution, we are also preparing ourselves for a political revolution perhaps on a small scale, [but] not everything is yet apparent. We see right now the first efforts being made for this. And some persons see it already as a failure, because it did not bring all the results from the first effort which they had hoped for. But this is the beginning, and as a party, as a group, we did not exist really, perhaps in some cases back in history. But some Mexican persons do it, who try to take this power, and now we start to see in New Mexico and Arizona practically for the first time Mexicans at such a high level there. In California you see the movement of the migratory workers, a political base which is already heard in many places. If in so many places there are 90 per cent, 80 per cent Mexicans, it is for that reason simply very, very probable that a political system of the Chicanos comes into being. This had not been possible in the old times, even though the population existed.

Joe: Well, I agree with what Tito said a moment ago, that what I could do more to help my people would be in education, not with arms. Now the revolution we just mentioned, I don't think it is happening now, except in different ways. It is a revolution that, we have to realize, cannot be a sterile matter. It is not a single form, but we are moving in different directions. I think, like Estêban, that perhaps there really is a political force in certain places, on a smaller level. And I think that there the revolution is happening. Now, what I would like to think more of is, we're all talking about education but very little about forms of education. I'm thinking not only of education, well, that my people could use to obtain jobs and to work less hard. Also education in the form of its culture; let's say, of the traditions of wisdom in religion, because this is very poorly understood by our people.

Pita: I think we need a revolution. No, I don't think there is a revolution going on, but I think we really have to undergo a lot of attitude change, re-examining that we were made to believe we were inferior. Like, I remember the feeling when I used to go to school, the feeling, the closeness in the family was kind of quaint, something that folkish kind of people did, like, you know. And I feel now that we're trying to change back. I don't know that we're ready for a revolution, but we need it! [Laugh] But I do feel, like, it's not gonna be through arms or something like that. I mean, we'll just gonna have to go back to the community, at least that's what I mean just now, thinking about going back to the community, and working for and with the people.

Cristóbal: I'd like to address myself first to the aspect of revolution. And I think we're in quite a predicament as a people, generally. I think you said very well, we need a revolution; but are we ready for it? I think we are the proverbial fat government in some aspects, we're very, in some areas, in some senses, we are comfortable. There are many points of agitation for our people, but you are at a certain point of comfort where it really doesn't turn you on to really shake things up or alter them very much. And I think that would be a problem. I mean, even in meetings such as in labor meetings, that is, the heads of labor in Texas, by heads of labor, I mean bosses, that have Chicanos working under them, their motto has been at times, "You have to keep these Mexicans hungry to keep them working." Also, as they think, "You got to keep them just enough fed to keep them satisfied." So they don't agitate anything or stir the boat. But there comes a realization, I think, and with that awareness, I think, a revolution is imminent. And I woudn't exclude a military revolution at all, because I believe at one point that will be inevitable, certainly encompassing everything else.

Q: Any chance of success?

A: In free America? But certainly the cry would be heard again and the notice would become more, and there could be some impact from a military revolution.

What would I change in America: I tend to have a lot of communistic ideas. And if I could change anything in the U.S. I would change, as we spoke earlier, redistribution of monetary values. Because we own all that land, and redistribution of land in that aspect. And I do believe we have to learn from other countries, particularly Cuba, who have adopted a socialist form of government. And, as it seems, I could not say for sure, but it would seem to me that they have acquired a certain quality for the common man that did not exist before.

Gilda: Well, I think if I had something I could change in the Mexican people I think it would be their religion. I think religion has been our great downfall. I blame the Catholic Church for Mexicans having an attitude, like, "Well, this is the way it is, you know, because God wants it this way, this is God's will. We will be poor, we will be suffering from poverty, we will be uneducated, but this is the way God has willed it. Don't worry, because you get your heaven, you get your reward in heaven." This has been a great problem with our people, because we are all Catholics, we are Roman Catholics, and I think the priests have misused religion very, very much. So I would really like to see that changed, you know.

Q: What is your opinion about the three names that I'm going to drop now: César Chávez, Reies L. Tijerina and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles?

Tito: I guess of the three I'd would probably prefer Tijerina. I don't think he's all that violent any more. I mean, they all of them represent a Don Quixote image in that they are fighting things, and I'm coming at the question for more personal kinds of reasons. González used to work as a bond bailsman and he doesn't speak very much Spanish. But he has done a lot of stuff and no one can deny that César Châvez hasn't done a lot for the farmworkers in California. But I feel Tijerina can do more, because he is so articulate in his Spanish. And then, like I said, it's a very personal thing.

Q: What about the effect that he has had?

A: Well, I don't know. It's hard if you want to find a tangible effect. Of the three César Châvez would be the most effective. G. Gonzâlez has a school in Denver. It's called the "Crusade for Justice", and what he's done, he has formed his own community school for Chicanitos and they have a number of things. They are not just academic but there's also a lot of other stuff. But I still admire Reies Lôpez Tijerina immensely. Whether or not he was effectual in terms of tangible benefits may be arguable, but I think he had a tremendous impact on the community. And if anything, I think it is important for people who are called leaders of the Chicano community, to be able to exemplify "chicanismo" in all aspects. You know, like I say, I respect César and "Corky".

Estêban: Let me first say something that I admire about Tijerina. And that is, maybe the way that he reacted to the situation in Tierra María. He's not a violent person; he used to be a minister. I've seen great, common people, very poor people like him. Maybe they associate with him, you know, even in what he did. Even though he went against the law, people still, you know, admired what he did. I favor, of the three I favor César. Maybe in a way he didn't gain the complete support, you know, and even now it shows at times he didn't gain the support of all the farmworkers, but somehow he gained the attention of the world. He became a figure head, and we needed a figure head to fit into our culture. Now, at least, you know, we got one thing that we, in our life, in our present society, that we can admire. And the peaceful revolution that he stands for, you know, maybe television shows, once in a while it's not really so, but idealistically so, you know, it stands that way. It sets us off as maybe a special kind of people.

Joe: This is a real tough question, 'cause I've heard all of them speak, and, in terms of who I favor, of the three I have to say "Corky" González. One, because he is working somewhat within limits, within the system but at the same time. Tijerina, I'm not familiar with Tijerina in 1975, I am familiar with what he was in the sixties. And I guess, we're back to this thing whether a revolution is imminent. Back then it was demonstrations, throwing rocks, and within that certain perspective, Tijerina was quite powerless. He's a phantastic orator, very articulate. And says a lot of things which, if one could implement them, would be of tremendous benefit for the Chicano community. However, he has been scarred, he has been burnt, and it's like Tito said, there's three Don Quixotes, but the "más quixotizado" [Laughter] would have to be Tijerina. Now, in terms of effect, I feel that perhaps César Chávez is the most of a contribution, not because he is better, or because he is this or that, but because he's been around for a long time and has worked consistently at it. So in that respect, I feel that César Chávez is perhaps the most effective one of the three. However, González, give him a few more years and he'll come up very strongly, because he's not been burnt enough, well, not quite as much - every one of us has been burnt, but at the same time he represents something which is very progressive; whereas César Chávez, you know, he is very much into the religious movement.

Pita: I wish I could be like Reies López Tijerina [Laugh], "Tiene muchos huevos". ("He's got balls") [Laugh] I feel he has to do it out of the system, not perpetuating it. Maybe

Châvez, like, maybe to a large extent the reason that he is so successful has been that he had a lot of support from the white liberal. I don't know that much about "Corky".

Cristóbal: I would set them into two categories, I mean the idealist and the practical. And I intend to include all facets of everything and I look at them idealistically. It implies the highest: the ideal as Reies Tijerina perpetuates it. He becomes the Don Quixote, the hero, and certainly those are necessary for us. We need saints, martyrs, so he's really part of what an individual would choose to be that model, even if it's something very personal that you can't go into. But I would choose him. He made an effort to a redistribution of land, which is his fight, to win back the land which was stolen.

Gilda: I'm gonna have to pass this question, I don't know enough about them.

Q: Would you, or could you marry a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant?

Tito: It's after the fact, but it's a good question. I would say that when I was younger, about sixteen or seventeen, when I didn't care about girls incidentally, among the guys, making it with a "gabacha" was supposed to be the ultimate in playboyship. It was chic, it was status, whatever. Now it has changed to a large degree. I have opinions on that now, and my opinion is that unless the person that a Chicano marries is sufficiently flexible so as to expect difficulties with children that come out of this marriage having some exposure, not having just some, but having a predominant exposure to being Chicano, then I'm opposed to it.

Q: Could you tell us some folk beliefs or examples of "curanderismos" that you either experienced yourself or saw in your communities?

Tito: There are at least three things that come to my mind. My parents used to have a fairly large section of special herbs that were sold to be used as curatives. But they weren't taken just as medicine, often they were used by a person who was called a "curandero", a person who was supposed to be andowed with special powers of healing.

Q: Do you know what they are called in English?

A: I don't know what you call them in English, it's "hierba buena", "hierba colorado", "rosada de Castilla", "ésta fíjate", "hierba de soldado". There were all kinds of herbs that we used to sell at the store, and they would be constantly purchased and be constantly supplied.

The other one was when I was small. I had a terrible earache and my mother believed in this "curandero", and he came by and gave me a special preparation to drink, a tea of some sort, and then he rubbed my head, and I remember his touching my hands and I went to sleep for about two or three hours and during that time my ear bled, it leaked a lot of wax. Suddenly I was O.K. I don't have any explanation what happened except I know what the result was. I do know that one of the things that was most important about it was that my relationship with him wasn't called professional, businesslike, as it normally takes place with a regular physician - a client relationship. He talked to me a lot and asked me questions. I was a little kid. He would ask me where it hurt, how it felt and that kind of things, but he had a very soothing approach, it made me feel very comfortable.

The third one is, my mother still practices it. She believes that if you use an egg whenever you have fever, to rub the body with that it takes the fever away. A raw egg. About six months ago I came down with a terrible fever, I had 104, and she persisted, she wanted to give me the rub-down with the egg. I resisted and I became better but I know that if it had gone any longer with that fever, that my mom would have insisted that I'd be rubbed down with the egg. So, those are just very real, practical things that I experienced.

Q: Did you hear of any witchcraft?

A: No, I've become familiar with "brujos" and "brujas", but it's mostly been an academic exercise. I don't remember anything about witchcraft while growing up.

Estéban: Personally, I haven't been close to witchcraft, but it seems like a common thing in the neighborhood. But the people are very truthful when they talk about visions, you know. Like, if they tell each other what they've seen along the way they better not be joking about it. And the same comments were made by other students about in J., they would talk about spirits at night that they have seen and I couldn't find out if they were honest who told them, things like these, you know. One other reference that I want to make was: in a case near an urban area near my home town a little kid was bitten by what seemed to be a bat, and immediately the fright seemed to spread among the people that it had been a vampire of some kind. So soon thereafter, all the houses in an area, several blocks to say the least, had crosses on top of the doors to warn off evil spirits. In fact, a lot of them have them up even today.

Pita: One practice that I've heard about was, like, if a person had the evil spirit, they put him on a table and then hé would be swept with a broom to make the evil spirits go away. And another one was, like, eating sugar, you know, to get rid of your fright. If something frightened you, people would give you sugar and I guess it gave you energy or whatever. Also I've heard about people drinking type of teas for kidney problems or bladder problems, those kind of things.

Q: Joe, did you have any contacts with "curanderos"? Or with witchcraft?

Joe: This is one of the things which interest me because, you know, I've always been interested in what has to deal with psychological dynamics or whatever. What can be explained rationally; what is just group belief. Everyone that's been mentioned so far has seen it done to some people, and it's been done to me too, and it has worked. But some of the more convincing ones are, like, when I first turned fourteen, I believe, all of a sudden, you know, I got asthma, an allergy, and it was really horrible, I had a very bad cough. I was very sick. And I was examined by some doctors in C.C. and they said, "Yeah, you got about a dozen allergies", you know. Immediately, they began to cut my foods, and stuff like that, to gear my diet, and stuff like that. At that time I really went down as far as my weight was concerned, I was really pale and sickly, and stuff like that. And I lived like this for about a year. And then I remembered something which a "curandero" had done to a relative of mine, and I had a kind of quite a bit of faith in his ability to heal, because he was not the faith healer, he dealt with herbs, and stuff like this. I do believe there is a rational basis for herbs. So I went up to him and I said, "Don Manuel, I've got asthma, I want you to cure it. And I got this problem because I can't eat so many foods because I'm allergic." He said, "Oh, as soon as you get outa here, go and get yourself an ice cream." You know, I hadn't touched an ice cream for a year, because this is one of the things that doctors said I was allergic to, after tests and everything. Well, I didn't quite have the faith to go and take an ice cream, but after a few days, you know, I did build myself up and I did have an ice cream - no reaction. But during this time I was taking the tea, you know, plus there were some prayers along which I'm sure served us, some sort of supportive meassures, "Padre Nuestros" and "Ave Marías". Well, he said, "You make this tea for about a month, and then I'm gonna give you another remedy which you take for another month, and then you will be rid of your problem." Well, I followed his directions to the letter and I felt fine; I was eating everything. Anyway, time passed, about six or seven months, and then I developed a cold which was threatening to become something more, so I went to see the doctor. And he gave me a very thorough examination and then he said, "It's funny, you're a very rare case, you have allergy but you don't have asthma." And at that point in time I really thought back and I remembered Don Manuel when I went for his help to cure me of asthma. So I decided to go back to Don Manuel and said, "I want you to cure my allergy now", and to this day, you know, I'm not allergic to anything. Well, that's one of them, but one of the most convincing things is something which happened to a relative of mine. During the time when he was fourteen years of age he also began to become more and more emotionally disturbed. Very emotionally disturbed, to the point where he was very violent, just what you would call crazy. Well, he was taken to a psychiatrist, he was clinically classified as schizophrenic and the treatment rate, the cure rate, is about 60 per cent using any kind of therapy. And naturally he was given shock treatments and medication, psycho-therapy, everything. And when he came, he was in a zombie state, that's what it was. He was out of tune with reality. He walked around, he drooled, he couldn't speak clearly, couldn't much care about the world. Well, so my relatives decided to go and take him to see Don Manuel, because by this time, they had really gotten broke, and there was no way they could continue with a psychiatrist. By the way, he was in a hospital, a mental hospital. Anyway, he was taken to this Don Manuel guy and he began by talking to him, even though, you know, the guy didn't really respond to him, and finally, in about three months' time, which is incredibly short for anything as severe as schizophrenia, this man was leading a very normal, healthy, and a very productive life.

Q: What did he do with him?

A: Well, he gave him some herbs, so that he could make some tea, plus prayers and, you know, he was required to go back and visit him once a month. And to this day this man is normal. Now, this is incredible.

Q: What kind of man is this Don Manuel? How does he live?

A: He lives in a little town called Daly, Texas, it might be close to Corn City, I'm not sure. Anyway, right now he is a fifty-five year old man, fifty-five or sixty. He also owns a restaurant there, he lives very poorly even though he is really quite well off. One thing about him, he doesn't charge you when you go to him. In fact, I walked out of there without having paid him anything, and then I remember, hey, I forgot. But he always keeps a part of the money there which people bring. He doesn't accept checks or anything like this, even though rumor has it that people have written him up for 10,000 dollar checks. Now you also asked about witchcraft, right? I don't know if you all heard of this or not, but there is a particular legend among Chicanos and among the Mexican people. There is this legend about "lechuza", who is a witch disguised as a nightowl, except that it's a larger bird, the supernatural one, so to speak. When I was in high school, I was a very curious guy, and so were a lot of other people, the other guys, Mario and the other was named Jesús. And supposedly, according to legend, there is one prayer in the world that can bring down the animal and paralyze it at your feet. So that then you proceed to destroy it, "la lechuza". And the method of destroying it is by burning it in green wood. When you're praying this prayer, it's called "Las doce verbales del mundo"; after each small prayer you tie a knot. Now if you're perturbed in any matter or fashion, supposedly this bird can inflict pretty heavy punishment on you; scratches, clouting.

Tito: I always heard it was a messenger of death. I heard that if the "lechuza" flies over and it screams, it's announcing your death.

Joe: Anyway, it's really an exciting experience that we had, and it takes about ten minutes, I'll boil it down to a minimum to explain it. Well, we decided that we were gonna go through this. We went out to some scary place in the woods and performed this ritual to see if it was true or not. So we made all the necessary precautions, - we took a month's time to plan it out, and stuff. It's pretty close to a town called San Diego, or right beyond there. This is where a lot of lore comes into playing. Anyway, to put it in a nutshell and not going into all the details, it's just funny, how many premonitions there were that were seen to indicate: don't go! don't do it! And I counted them and they were exactly twelve which is more convincing. For instance, there was a storm right where we were, that was one. Other things were, you know, phones being unhooked, slightly to the point, you know, you try to call, the line is busy because the phone is off the hook. In my house they never had this, because the phone is very important. Another thing is, and I remember this as clearly as possible, this is what bothers me and this is what to this day baffles me. As we were riding on the road, I remember my friend in the back, asking, "Let me see the prayers", and I gave them to him and he was looking at them. He finished looking at them and I remember very clearly I opened my pocket like that and made sure they were in there. Well, somehow, when we got to the place, which was way out there in the middle of nowhere, it turned out that they weren't in my pocket. What's more, now before we got to that ranch we had to change cars because we were in this beat-up old car and needed a pick-up to get to the real, you know, the real place, the backwoods. Anyway, you know. I really started to curse, and everything, because I was really pissed off, 'cause it was something I had really looked forward to and now, it was all blown to shambles and stuff like this, after being planned, you know. The things that were coming up as premonitions were just amazing. Well, that night, my friends told me, "Give it up, man, maybe it's a sign, give it up!" So I said, "O.K., I give it up." Another sign was the fact that the storm cleared up very quickly, I mean, very quickly within five minutes time. When we go back to the place where we had left the car the prayers were on the back seat. How do you explain that? The bird doesn't appear until you start doing the prayers. I mean, there were just so many premonitions toward not doing it, and eventually we just didn't do it. Of course, I had planned to get the guys back together again and do it, but they never did want to go again. After several nights, you know, they said that they heard a lot of stuff, a lot of scratching, you know, real close. Plus I saw an unusual number of birds on our ranch.

Cristóbal: The only experience I had with "curanderismo" was when I was little. We had an accident, an automobile accident in my dad's Studebaker, his favorite car, and it got smashed. My mother used to be the one who believed most in "curanderismo". She had experiences with it, her father was quite a believer in it. And so after the accident, she took us to a man named Don Ventura in F. Texas, and he was the local "curandero". And she took us so that he could "curarnos de susto"("cure us of fright, of the shock"). And at the time I didn't know it, but he talked to us for a little while, he held our hands a lot, he touched our head a lot and he talked all the while. And then he also performed this little rite with these, I thought they were diamonds, little rocks, crude rocks, and he rubbed our feet with them and our forehead in the sign of a cross and said a "Padre Nuestro" and "Ave Maria", and then he gave my mom a little jar with the christals in it and told her to repeat the procedure every night for a week. I remember a couple of instances; I remember where at home after we took a bath and were ready to go to bed, she would go through the ritual, and after a week we were "curados de susto." I guess, what I believe in is that is the faith that is attached to the tangible articles, the catalyst that is in the promises, right, in this case being the little christals which later I found out to be alunite. Another practical aspect of "curanderismo" which I tried is "rosa de Castilla", which is rose petals, dried rose petals. And the way I used them, I used to often get cold sores, canker sores, that's what we used to call them in the neighborhood, and you go to a store called Texmex, a store where they sell "hierbas". And you toast it on a "comal", on the stove, and then you grind it with sugar, you apply it to the sore, and then you swallow it. And it does something, it relieves, it relieves the pounding pains. And it does something to your gastrointestinal system, it relieves the symptoms. I would recommend it, it's a very good. Another one is "piedra Imán", it is a little pouch and has in it "piedra Imán", which is magnet stone, and a twig in the shape of a cross, and it's died with an orange color, and a few other little stones, probably alunite is in there as well. And I think the idea connected with "piedra Imán" is, that if you wear it in a pouch around your neck, if any evil spirit comes your way or casts the evil eye upon you, the magnet stone will attract such spirits or such evil eyes and hold them within itself. It's an amulet.

4. Ramiro D.
20 years
C., New Mexico (E)

Q: What do people in C. live from, agriculture?

A: They live there from the potash mines. They got sulphur, and everything.

Q: Did your family immigrate from Mexico or have they been there for a long time?

A: They came from Texas, my father came from Texas, my mother came from California.

Q: They were both American born?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you speak Spanish at home?

A: Ah, it depends. If I speak to my father I do. He doesn't speak English; he does, but he don't want to.

Q: Why?

A: To him it's his, his heritage, pride. And he really prefers not talking.

Q: Has he suffered a lot in life?

A: Yes, I think so, because he worked twenty-eight years in potash mines, right, and then they came out and lay off. He was of the ones that got laid off. He wasn't really supposed to, because he's been in the mines for so long. Now they got down on him because a new boss that came in.

Q: He resented that a lot.

A: Right.

Q: What did he do after he lost his job?

A: He went to S.C., New Mexico. He worked there at the mines, copper mines.

Q: Did your mother work also?

A: My mother used to work way back. She worked in a barbecue pit, you know.

Q: How many sisters and brothers do you have?

A: I got four sisters and six brothers, including myself.

Q: Are they mostly at home still?

A: No, the only one that's at home is my little sister and my brother. They're very little, you know.

Q: Would you consider your family a close family, or did you have problems in the family? Did your father and mother get along?

A: /Pause/ As long as I remember they did. When I was about five or six, I don't remember when, my father used to drink a lot. And since he cut that out, he doesn't drink or smoke any more.

Q: Why did he stop all of a sudden?

A: I don't know, it happened, I think, he looked to see what he was doing and he realized that he's got a family to support, right? In other words, he's got his shit together, you know. He got his, anyway, I think he managed pretty good.

Q: Do you consider your family well-to-do or poor, or how would you say it was for you at home?

A: My family just did and is doing all right. But it could be worse, you know. Since the way my mother and my father brought us up we worked, right, and everything is fine. We worked, gave her the money, right, and kept something for ourselves. And that's the way we got around. But it's not that she needed it, so we wouldn't spend it foolishly, you know.

Q: Do you consider your parents good parents?

A: Right, I think so in a way, but it depends on the kid, if he wants to do what he's got in mind, there is nobody going to change his mind. Everybody's got his own mind, right, and you got to talk to him and not smack him and throw him against the wall.

Q: They did talk to you?

A: Right, but at first, my mother, you know, "Hit him, man." My father always said, "No. I let him go this time but he can't go next time. He can't go all the times, he's got to do this here first before he can go." He would do it, you know, and I took off anyway.

Q: Did your father have the better education or your mother?

A: My mother. My mother is pretty smart, I think. She only went to eighth grade, she was doing my eleventh grade math and she likes to study a lot for her own knowledge, you know. She wouldn't drink, wouldn't smoke, nothing.

Q: You said you were speaking Spanish at home, especially with your father. Can you read and write it?

A: No, I can speak but I can't write or read. I can if I want, if I really get down to it.

Q: But it's difficult for you?

A: Right, it's a little harder than something else.

Q: Did you go to school in that same town C.?

A: Right.

Q: How far did you get in school?

A: I got to, yeah, to eleventh grade. I dropped out twice.

Q: Why did you drop out twice?

A: It was nothing for me there, you know, to myself. I'd go someplace and find out life the way it is, you know, see if I was gonna need that, you know.

Q: You were bored.

A: Right. I liked school, because there's a lot of chicks there, you know. And that's what everybody goes to school for, you know, chicks, at school.

Q: So why did you drop out if there were so many chicks at school?

A: I dropped out because I was bored. I was going nuts, you know. I had to go away for myself. I was seventeen. I hitchhiked to California. It took me a week to get there but I got there.

Q: What did you do in California?

A: I was bumming first, and I looked around, and then I started working.

Q: Did you tell your parents?

A: I told them and my mother just said, "I want to send you to a boys' school." "Send me to a boys' school and I won't be your son any more", you know. And she realized, you know, that I had in my mind, "I'm going, I'm going," and she knows me, because if I got something on my mind I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna do it. And she said, "Why, I'm not going to give you the money." "I don't need no money." So I wanna go work. I went to my uncle for a while, digging trees, you know. So I got a little bit of money and that didn't last too long.

Q: How long did you stay in California?

A: I went to my brother first. I didn't have his address but I looked for him and found him. And I stayed there for about two months. And then I went up north where my grandmother lives. She's halfway down by that little town Fresno, California. And there was a lot of work there, right there, and I liked this area, the fields, you know, for the Mexicans right there. And that's where I went, where I had a cousin, and he put me on as a foreman 'cause he's got a good thing up there, in the field, and everything.

Q: You worked there picking fruit?

A: The first thing I worked there until I got a little smarter and looked around, I was cutting grapes. It's tough but it's good money, fast money. You can make a hundred dollars a day if you really work at it.

Q: Were you paid by crate?

A: By sheet. There is this sheet of paper you're getting, eleven cents, some places ten, cutting grapes, and you can go cut and then lay them out. And if you're good at working, you can make five dollars a roll.

Q: Who were your friends when you were in C., Mexicans or Anglos?

A: They were mostly Chicanos to me.

Q: What do you find different in Anglos?

A: What I find different? They're not brought up the way they're supposed to do, they're brought up hating people, that's what's wrong with them. It's the parents. My parents, you know, never told me, "Grab that Black and smack him, and grab this white and smack him", you know. They always told me, you know, they wouldn't say nothing bad, except for my father, he don't like Blacks.

Q: You felt that whites were looking down on you, in C.?

A: Right, my town, that's all there is in that town. Not all, some whites, some whites there is, and the other ones that are prejudiced and really get down on Mexicans and Chicanos are the cowboys. They call them "stompers" back home. Yeah, they got shit kickers as boots, cowboys. That's the kind of people that always fights, laying around dead, you know. Chicanos, they stand up for themselves, you know. What they do, they just come in and blow off your light poles, you know. This is where your little brothers and sisters get around at night, and play around, the light poles. These dudes come around and shoot them, blowing them away so the guys say, "No way", you know, then somebody might get hit later, you know. They're too carried away, you got to put an end to it.

Q: So there is a lot of tension in that town. How was that at school?

A: Right. Let's say, like, these stompers, they stick that snuff in their mouth, right, let's say they're spitting it all over the place, right? And they see a Chicano take a spit on the sidewalk and they jump all over him. They don't see that other kind of greenish shit that's all over the place, you know. All they do is just spit around. That causes a lotta fights, too. How would you like somebody to spit on your shoe. "Hey, what are you doin' there?" "I didn't see you", you know. "Next time you better look", you know. You get him to think and next time, "What are you doin'?" And then they go, "Who are you, dirty Mexican?", you know. And a riot breaks out.

Q: How about at school, did teachers get back at you?

A: Teachers, there's a lot of them there. We were brought up mostly with whites, you know, and they act like them and they want to be there. But they get down on their own people, you know. And I say, you don't like your own people; help them out.

Q: Was Spanish spoken at that school?

A: Right, we spoke Spanish. People hung around together.

Q: Instruction was in English?

A: Right, but they had Spanish classes.

Q: In your class were there mostly Chicanos?

A: Well, there's a lot of Chicanos there, the majority was Chicanos. It depends what kind of class it is; Chicanos sort of slide off to the better side and they try to get the easier classes. And we got a hard class, like, let's say, English, you know, and a lot of Chicanos start staying away, missing as much as they can. I don't know, I've seen them, I'd take anything they'd let me.

Q: Is there anybody in your family that influenced you, that you either like of dislike strongly?

A: My brother I like, he put a good example for most of us.

Q: How old is he?

A: He's around twenty-three.

Q: What did he do that you like?

A: See, he's got a good head on his shoulders, you know. He knows how to get around, and he's been to school. You know, he always tells the people, he goes to them and tells them, "You know, I don't like what you doin' there, you know. You don't own my car, get off of it!" He'd do this. It don't matter if he's a big man, you know, that's the way he is.

Q: Did he complete high school?

A: No, but he did afterwards, in one of those evening courses.

Q: Anybody else in the family, whom you dislike maybe?

A: I can't say that. I don't dislike nobody in my family, 'cause we all grew up together, right? There's always somebody fighting in a family, right, even if it's your own family, so it's gossip or something. My mother's the only one that's real. Everything she told me and I did it. She was right. Everything she told me not to do was right and I did it, and I was wrong. And she was right. My mother's always right if you ask me.

Q: Were there any experiences in your childhood or as an older boy that shocked you, impressed you in any way?

A: I don't know right now, not that I can think of right now. I do in a way, like, when I was small, right, I used to live in this house and there was Blacks and Chicanos mixed. They didn't get along too well, you know. Blacks telling, "You stole this toy from this dude", and that's what the Blacks was doing all the time. They say, "Chicanos or Mexicans, they steal a lot", right, and it depends of where you're at, you know. Not everybody steals, I mean, you know, it's just a certain race, or everything would be gone.

Q: If somebody asked you, who are you, what are you, what do you tell them?

A: I'd say more or less Chicano, 'cause people more or less look up to that instead of Mexican, 'cause Mexican, "Oh, you know, he's from Mexico, you know." Mexican is being used to a lot of bad ways, a Chicano is a new word.

Q: Have you heard about Chicano civil rights?

A: Yeah, I've heard about it, I've been around.

Q: Are you in favor of civil rights for Chicanos?

A: Right, I'm in favor of it. Like, a lot of rights, they should start it. Like the Blacks, they have a lot of rights. They overdid it and they still trying to overdo it. They wanna take over the whole States, trying not only to do that. They're trying to take over any place they're at. And then they, they try to take everything somebody has, somebody owes them something. They gotta just face life the way everybody is.

Q: Have you heard the term "La Raza"?

A: Yeah. I heard it.

Q: Do you know what it means?

A. Yeah, it means "race", it mostly concerns Chicanos and Mexicans. That's what to me it does.

Q: Which of the four leaders have you heard of: Chávez, Tijerina, Váldez, González?

A: Tijerina, Chávez.

Q: What do you think of Chávez?

A: I think, Chávez got something going. He got more than anybody else that tried to do something, I think. He's been up and people heard about him, you know. And he has done a lot for a lot of people, you know. A lot of things he couldn't do, because he ain't got the back-up, you know, for them.

Q: He is for nonviolent action. What do you think of the "Brown Berets" who are for violent action?

A: The "Brown Berets", they could do it, right, they can do, but a lot of them are just there to do violence, right? And a lot of them don't know why they're there, you know. I mean, they don't know why they're there, they're just following them, and don't know what to fight for. They gotta know what they wanna do before they can go out and tear up somebody's property, no? The same Blacks, they tore up the whole place, they got around. The "Brown Berets" went to New Mexico and messed up Albuquerque; New Mexico don't need them that much. The majority there is Chicanos and Mexicans, that's the majority, all they need is one leader to pick them all up and make them listen, that's all. They don't need violence, 'cause violence they got enough.

Q: What do you think are the major problems of Chicanos today?

A: A lot of them don't give a shit, they're too lazy about it. A lot of them don't have education and a lot of them don't want to get out and work.

Q: So education is important for you?

A: Right, 'cause education brings good money. That's what everybody needs. And Chicanos don't have, they don't give a shit. All they want is drinking, getting drunk and everything.

Q: Do you think America is a racist society, is there racial discrimination?

A: Yeah, definitely, there's a lot of it.

Q: What should be done against it? Should it be fought?

A: It should be fought by the government for everybody, make everybody equal like the Constitution says. They gotta follow by it, but it ain't worth a shit anyway. Who wrote it are dead, the people who wrote it are dead, you know, and I think they oughta throw it out and make a new one. 'Cause people, you know, Constitution was written way back and those people are old-timers.

Q: Who is profiting from racism?

A: Anglos.

Q: Which groups, and/ or organizations profit from it most?

A: I'd say Blacks and Anglos, right. But mostly, they got bigger problems than anybody else, always fighting. These dudes, they want to take everything.

Q: Say, what was the percentage of Blacks in your home town?

A: About, ten per cent, there weren't too many.

Q: What do you think should be done against violence and crime in big cities?

A: I think they should make a stricter law and I'd say, take money away. When they catch them, take more money off them and put them away. Or don't take the money, just put them away. As you learn it from there, you know, when you're in there.

Q: Were you ever in jail?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: How come?

A: Well I was, I would say, prejudiced. I was in a pool hall and I was drunk. And my brother and I were playing pool upstairs. There was a cop, a night watchman, he kept looking at us, you know, like, this dude, we knew he didn't like us. I don't know why, maybe he thought we were something better than him, you know. And this dude, he was a, I'd say he was a Chicano, a cop. So he was a Chicano cop, right, he told us to go, you know, "It's time to close." My brother said, "We still got the game to finish playing." He said, "Go now!" My brother went downstairs, asked the manager, he said, "O.K.", and he saw it. My brother, we laughed and everything, and he probably thought we were laughing at him. In a way, he came up and started putting the balls in. Said, "It's time for you guys to go." "No, it ain't." And he got my brother and my brother said, "We want to play another quarter." And so he said, "I'm goin' take you in for disorderly conduct." And he had a walkie-talkie, right, and over the walkie-talkie he had already called the courthouse right across. And my brother turned round, "You ain't takin' me no place, you wanna take me for a reason, right?" My brother turned around and slapped him, you know. He pulled out his cane and stick and everything, and before you know it there was six more coming up. Me and my two brothers got in a fight with them. So we got thrown in jail, right.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: They gave me thirty days, but that was without battery. I got away with it, 'cause my mother got the lawyer, right, and the lawyers did a good job for us. They knew it was in our favor anyway, 'cause it was police discrimination, you know.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was eighteen.

Q: How did they treat you in jail?

A: There ain't enough for a pig to live in there. It didn't fit. 'Cause that place, you know, the mattress is, you might as well just lie on the floor, you know, 'cause they were not clean and they were hard too, you know. And, you know, I didn't like it at all. Taught me a lesson, next time to think about never hitting a policeman, you know.

Q: What would your reaction be if your sister married a blond, Anglo-Saxon Protestant?

A: Oh, as long as the dude don't have nothing against me it's all right. That means it'd be all right to me. 'Cause he won't be prejudiced against her, 'cause he knows what she is, you know.

Q: But you would prefer her on principle, to marry a Chicano?

A: Right, I'd prefer for her to marry one of her kind of people in a way. It depends, but I would prefer that, you know.

Q: Are you aware of the fact that you have Indian blood?

A: Right, my grandmother was full-blooded.

Q: What tribe was she from?

A: She was a Navajo, I think.

Q: You don't mind having Indian blood?

A: No, I mean, it was there when I was born. I'd rather have Indian blood than Black, to me.

Q: What do you know of Indian history?

A: I think, they had it made; the Anglos knew they would gonna take over, so they had to wipe them out. The Indians, they were doing all right, way back. Then, they got the white man who said, "We have to do something to those dudes, they're getting too far ahead of us", and they did to the Indians like they did to everybody else. 'Cause Anglos are weird people for me.

Q: How close do you feel to Mexico? Is it to you something like a second mother country?

A: For me it is, I liked it. But in a way I've seen a lotta them who didn't, 'cause the Mexicans see you from the States, they say, "Well, we try to rip them off", like they rip Americans off the same way. But if you rap to them and say, "No, you don't do this to me", you know, it's different. They understand.

Q: Do you find that Chicanos are discriminated against when they are looking for jobs?

A: Yeah, in a lot of ways. They give them the dirtiest jobs. "You don't know how to do a shit." If you never tried it, you know, if you tried it, that's how you learn.

Q: Do you know the word "machismo"?

A: I've heard of it but I don't know it.

Q: What do you expect from your wife, should she be a virgin?

A: She was, I'm married. I got smart, you know. I had seen a lotta them, you know, who weren't.

Q: That was important to you that she be a virgin?

A: To me it was, 'cause a lotta people look at her and you're in the same town, and say, "Look at that dude, that dumb ass, I did it to that chick and he's gonna get married to her." And he laughs at your ass. And to me that's the way it was. I had to get a virgin. I don't care what somebody's saying, 'cause I know I did it, 'cause I know.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: A good life is I have enough of what I want.

Q: Now, what do you want?

A: I like to have a easy life, you know. But I would like to work for it, right, but have it easy. Not nobody give it to me, you know.

Q: What kind of job, for example, do you want to have?

A: I'm gonna open my business, management. You see, I wanna open me a bar. It's a dangerous job but it's good money 'cause everybody drinks. You gotta look at it that way, too. You see, I'm not gonna be taking care of the bar, I'm just gonna open it.

Q: Now what do you want to do with the money that you are going to make?

A: I'm not trying to get up there with the rich people, you know. I wanna live just the way I was brought up. It was average, American type, you know.

Q: Do you want a house?

A: Yeah, that's one thing I want to have, a roof over my head, a car, good clothes, and all that.

Q: What are the things you like in your free time?

A: I like to go hunting, that's one of my favorite sports, and skiing, waterskiing, horseback riding.

Q: How do you want to raise your children?

A: I gotta look at the time now and the way things are changing and then let them know about it. Raise them up like my father and mother raised me up in a way, you know, in a way, 'cause that's the only way I think, 'cause to me I was raised up in a way, wrong or right. To me it was right.

Q: What was wrong and what was right?

A: Like, my mother always talking about gossip in the family. I don't think that was right. In other words, I did look around at my aunts and did they ever gossip about my mother. They're always doing it, you know.

Q: What were their favorite topics in gossip?

A: I'd say drinking most of the time, fighting, who did this, stuff in the TV movies shows, this I don't like, stupid movies.

Q: What were the good things in your education at home?

A: Get out and work. They showed me how to work earlier.

Q: Do you want to be the boss in the house?

A: Well, me and my wife get along real good; we sit down and discuss instead of putting black eyes on her and stuff like that. And we get around all right, because to me she's got more brains than I do, you know. I don't know, I let her take care of some parts and when it ain't right, I step in, right?

Q: What do you think of Puerto Ricans?

A: You get along in a way but there's always something wrong. There's something that doesn't get in between us.

Q: What is it?

A: I'd say a lot of them act like Blacks.

Q: And what exactly does that mean?

A: But I got nothing against them, 'cause they just trying to get up like everybody, and I think Puerto Ricans are always thinking they're better than Chicanos. There are some Blacks that are friends of mine. There's a nigger and there's a Black. A nigger is a dude who's trying to fuck you over all the time, and there's a Black and he's cool.

Q: What exactly is it that causes trouble between Chicanos and Puerto Ricans?

A: They think they're a lot better than you, they want no part of you. You can feel it, but, you know, to me, that's the way they think. And you know, it's just the way nobody gets around together, 'cause they speak too fast and I can't understand them. "I don't want to talk to that dude no more, I don't understand him anyway." That's what a lotta times I said to myself; I looked around, "Why don't you dudes slow down?"

Q: Would you join a protest demonstration or march?

A: Yeah, if they're doing the right thing I'd go along with them. If they want better jobs for Chicanos, and everything, you know. I would go for that. I'd go right with them, I might even get shot but I'd go along.

Q: Would you join in a riot or a violent demonstration?

A: Yeah, I would, if they fight for the right thing I would, not for a candy bar.

Q: Which kind of a neighborhood would you like to live in?

A: A neighborhood, like, that's mixed.

Q: What do you mean by "mixed"?

A: Every kind of race, 'cause that way nobody, if there's too many on one side of the street, can take over the other side. And that kind of neighborhood I like, and peaceful too.

Q: Do you have any experiences with drugs?

A: Yeah, I've experienced almost anything there is.

Q: When did you start taking drugs?

A: That was, I was seventeen, in California. It was easy to get it in that place.

Q: Did you try heroin?

A: Yeah, I tried it, I didn't like it. It makes you sleep, you know. It ain't no good, you know, unless you sell it and make good money off it and then it's good for you until the dudes who uses it is a vegetable, you know. It ain't no good, heroin. It don't give you that much. I smoked pot more than anything, 'cause pot gives you a better high than anything, 'cause that high on heroin is just a waste. It's a waste of your brain, a waste of your time, a waste of yourself.

Q: What about LSD?

A: I didn't try LSD but I took acid, it's about the same.

Q: Did you have horror trips also?

A: I'd say I don't wanna take any more since the last bad trip I had.

Q: Have you been a dealer, a pusher?

A: Yeah, I dealed before. It's good money but, you know, everybody wants a good piece of action. too.

Q: Were you prosperous?

A: Yeah, it's good money but it's a scary life. You got a fifty/fifty chance they're gonna catch you and put you away for the rest of your years. It's good money, fast money.

Q: How much profit did you make, for instance?

A: I'd say about a key of pot, bought in Mexico for $ 80,00 - you get 42 lids out of it, you get about $ 420,00 out of it and you get about $ 350,00 profit, I'd say. The farther north the better.

Q: Which political leaders would you vote for: Carmichael, King, Ché Guevara, Castro, J.F. Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", the "Black Muslims", Châvez?

A: I'd go for Ché Guevara and Kennedy.

Q: What makes you pick Ché Guevara?

A: Guevara had a good thing going for himself, and I know he wanted to get his people in a way, you know. And we'd really get him in New Mexico, you know, and lead the Chicanos. I think our people'd look up and see what's going on, 'cause nowadays you can't do nothing without talking, talking about, you gotta let them know.

Q: Is Guevara known in New Mexico?

A: No, he's not known. But in Mexico he is, in bars. I've seen that, pictures with the beret on the border when you're crossing the big canal they got. I've seen that and I've seen it on the backs of dudes riding around their bicycles. I didn't know what it meant until I'd seen a book and said, "I gotta read this."

Q: Do you believe in your own dreams?

A: Yeah, I believe in them, try to get them to come true. I have dreams sometimes and most of them come true. I got a weird mind to myself, I think, I can't figure it out 'cause I dream stuff that happened a day before, I mean, at night and it happens the next day.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: An example. I was home, right? My mother said, "What are you thinkin' about?" I said, "Here comes Joanna, my old lady. She's comin' to the door." "You're crazy." So she was coming, she knocked and she opened and she was there. Twenty minutes later the same with my cousin's uncle coming over. The same thing, you know, I could see him in my mind, see him walking. To me I thought that was weird, you know. I don't know, I can't explain it myself either. It's weird, my mind's weird.

Q: You were raised a Catholic?

A: No, Assembly of God, my mother was trying to get me into this church, you know.

Q: Assembly of God, is that a Protestant denomination?

A: It's Christian, one of these, I don't know.

Q: You went with her to church some time?

A: She took me into it. That I kinda minded, 'cause the church, all they do is gossip. Sometimes it's better not to go, 'cause every time people goes it's to gossip.

Q: But in the church service, what did they do?

A: Rock and roll stuff, you know. It was hot and these people kinda scared me 'cause they wouldn't let me sleep. And these people dropping around. They start praying and they start yelling at each other, I don't know.

Q: Did they see spirits or what?

A: Yeah, they supposed to, but now they faked it out, I've seen that, you know. And I watched this old lady, you know, and she says, "Aw, aw", and she makes some weird noises, and stuff. And the pastor would come up and put his head on her and do this. She just lay there and shake, and everything, you know. Half of the others would be howling, sitting down, praying to themselves, and those are the people I dig, you know, sit down and pray to themselves. They, the other half, were supposed to have some kind of spirits, they run all around, their heads cut off. And right there I didn't go to church any more, I never wanted to anyway, 'cause I would rather like a Catholic Church a lot better.

Q: What do you think made your mother go to that church?

A: She didn't believe in drinking, you know. She was a Catholic before, I was baptized as a Catholic. She didn't believe in it. It musta' been my aunt. She always kept telling her, "Come over here." It is a lot better in a way than Catholic, for her; that's where all her money goes, the church. She don't do what some of those ladies do, she just goes there and sits down and prays, you know.

Q: Did your father come along too?

A: That's what helped my father out too, 'cause in a Catholic Church he used to drink a lot. When he went over to this church he ain't touched a drop now. He would be sitting there drinking everything. Yeah, he sits there and watches drink and everything. And we try to offer him one, you know, he says, "No", no matter if he's feeling good, too.

Q: And he went along to the services also?

A: Right, he still goes. By himself sometimes, 'cause my mother don't believe it in a way. She kinda got mad and had a problem with the church.

Q: Why?

A: 'Cause she's supposed to be some kind of treasurer, right, for it, and they took her off and put her on in some ways. She got mad, you know, she gets mad like that and doesn't go to church and sometimes she does, you know. She's been in the church for a while.

Q: Do you think there is something like a God?

A: Yeah, I think there is a God. I don't know if that's the right word for it, but there is something.

Q: Do you think there is life after death?

A: Life after death? No, 'cause I've never have seen nobody around. First I'd have to die, you know.

Q: Do you think there is something like a Day of Judgement?

A: In a way I do, in a way I don't. To me I don't know, 'cause it never happened. And sometimes books don't tell you the right things, too, you know. I know there's more or less somebody around, but I don't know all this other stuff.

Q: Do you believe that there is a Devil?

A: Yeah, in a way that is. In a way I don't know if it's the Devil or what, something else.

Q: Did you have any experience with the Devil?

A: Yeah, I had it, I had one experience. I was sober, I was laying on my bed in S. C., New Mexico. S. C. is known for a lotta "brujas", witches, you know, they burn a lotta stuff, you know. And by looking at your eyes, by looking at you, you can't go to sleep at night, you know, stuff like that. And, like, this house, we were living there, it was supposed to be haunted, and probably that was in my mind. I don't believe in it in a way. I've seen it but I still don't believe it, 'cause I touched it, you know. There was an old man, I opened my eyes, first I was going to sleep, I opened them and I see an old man, with a long hair and a beard, white hair and long, kinda grizzly, gypsy style, and I kinda got scared. My eyes were wide open and I closed them, you know, I thought it was a hallucination.

Q: Was he in the street?

A: No, that was in the bedroom, he was right by the door.

Q: He didn't say anything?

A: No, he was just standing, watching me, you know.

Q: He was all white?

A: He was all white color and I closed my eyes and I went to sleep. 'Cause there's another thing, occasion, that happened to me. I was on the bed, right, and there was our phone, I was just fixing to grab it and somebody, like somebody had sit down on the bed. Sit down and, like, I started turning round and I couldn't, I couldn't move. So then, when I moved, the bed kinda lifted. And it was weird, you know, 'cause I turned around and I see nobody. Nobody come in, 'cause my eyes just towards the door, you know, I was picking up the phone. It was real weird.

Q: Do you think there is something like bad, evil spirits?

A: Yeah, [pause] yeah, I think so. Have you ever seen an exorcism? I think there could be something like that.

Q: Have you heard about it, in your family?

A: Yeah, I heard a lot. My mother always tells a story about the old days, and stuff like that. A lady walks down at a river, right, and she walks looking for her baby. And a lotta people have seen her, but I never have, you know. Like, I used to walk down the canal by myself at night. It was spooky down there to see that woman.

Q: What does the "llorona" do?

A: She's crying, she cries like a Siamese cat.

Q: And then you are lured into the water, is that it?

A: Yeah, you fall into the water or they find you with your head chopped off, or something like that. It's weird, you know. It's just to keep people in the streets, I think.

Q: You were mentioning that your grandmother was a Navajo. Did you meet her, was she young enough so that you could see her?

A: My grandmother, I've seen her before.

Q: Was she full-blooded Navajo?

A: Full-blooded.

Q: Did she communicate to you in English or Spanish?

A: Spanish. And I've seen her making us "tortillas" in her house, like the Navajos used to do it. And she was eighty-nine, I think, and she was still cooking and everything, and she had a good eyesight and everything. She used to know a lot of old stories, too.

Q: She was still really very much into Indian culture?

A: Right. She lived with her old type of stove, you know. She had her money, but that's the way she'd rather live.

Q: Was she bitter about the Anglos? Did she realize what white Americans have done to Indians?

A: In a way, that's all, she was prejudiced against the Anglos. She didn't even want to speak English, she wanted to have no part of them, you know. In a way, I don't know, it was her doing.

Q: Did you respect her, did you like her?

A: Yeah, I respected her a lot and I liked her a lot, the way she lived. I came in drunk and she wouldn't mind.

Q: You drank a lot when you were younger?

A: Right, bootleggers, the bootleggers over there that's the way we got our beer, everything. And Sundays they don't sell beer in New Mexico, in the whole state. We'd buy it off bootleggers for more.

Q: When did you have your first girl?

A: I was around eleven.

Q: You knew what it was all about?

A: Yeah, 'cause the dudes I hang around with, they always think, like, "Let's do this to this chick," you know. And I learned from them, right, when a whore comes and she throws her ass, everybody jumps on her. That's the way, and I was hanging around with them. I did what they did, right?

Q: It was a matter of pride doing it?

A: Right. You grab the broad and you do it first and then you call the dudes after you before she gets her clothes back on. That's why I said to myself, I gotta find me a virgin, right. I guess I did, anyway.

Q: Did you have many women?

A: Not that early, but when I was about fifteen I did. Pick up a lotta chicks, at school, any place.

Q: Did you ever go to a "curandero"?

A: No, I don't go to them,'cause I don't know what they're cooking. They take leaves off the trees and they boil them and burn them and try to give them to somebody as poison or something. They're crazy. The old ladies are old, right, and a lot of these remedies do work, you know. You get sick and they get a bunch of leaves and give it to you, you know. I've seen it before and I've seen them burn all these weeds and stuff. My brother used to get down on them. And I seen them before, they call them "La Lome", you know, and it's on a little hill where all the houses of the Chicanos are. And these old ladies get together, on the Sundays or Saturdays, whatever dates, a bunch of witches of them there, start throwing stuff, you know.

Q: Are they praying or what do they do? Have you ever seen them in action?

A: I've seen them, they make weird noises, you know. It's real weird. They hold hands, you know. Some other old ladies burn stuff and they're saying, they put a curse on somebody and, I don't know if it works or not.

Q: Do they talk English or Spanish?

A: Spanish. The old ladies don't speak English, you know.

Q: Are these old customs dying out?

A: No, no no, there are some young chicks there too. A couple of them I knew, I kinda had to go around them. In a way they believe it, in a kinda way. Mostly I don't. I don't want no part of those people, 'cause it might come true, you know, and I don't wanna be cursed or worsen my life or something like that, you know.

Q: What would the changes be in America that you would like to see if you had the power?

A: Discrimination. They gotta put a stop to it, get everybody around together, get along. And live in a better country.

5. Tomás R.
22 years
L.C., New Mexico (E, S)

Q: Which kind of a town is L.C.?
A: Quite big, about fifteen thousand live there.
Q: Is there also some industry?
A: Yes, there is.
Q: Up to which date did you live there?
A: Up to a year ago, when I joined the Army.
Q: What is your father's job?
A: To put cars together, he's a mechanic.
Q: And your mother, is she also working?
A: No, she doesn't work.
Q: How many children were there?
A: Twelve. Six boys and six girls.
Q: What were the occupations of your brothers?
A: They work with my father.
Q: Which members of your family emigrated from Mexico?
A: My mother's mother.
Q: Your father was already born in the U.S.?
A: Yes.
Q: And he speaks English correctly?
A: Yes, very well.
Q: Which language was spoken at your home?
A: English and Spanish, both.
Q: Which language do you consider your native tongue?
A: [Pause] Spanish. But I feel now more at ease speaking English.
Q: Well, why don't we change then. Where did you live in L.C.? Did you live in a neighborhood of Mexican Americans or was it mixed?
A: Where I was raised it was all Mexican American.

Q: Did your father have a hard time making enough money for such a large family? Was there always enough money in the house?

A: No, there wasn't. It was pretty hard for him. Everybody was home at that time. It was pretty hard.

Q: What kind of schooling did you get?

A: I went to high school and now I'm doing courses for college on base.

Q: What would you like to do once you're out of the Army?

A: I haven't quite decided yet what I'm gonna do. But I'd rather go back to college and see. It'll be a lot better.

Q: What do you think are some differences between a Mexican American family and an Anglo family?

A: There is a big difference. A Mexican American family is a lot better, it's warmer. You can be yourself.

Q: Is there more respect for father and mother?

A: Yeah. In Spanish it is. There is a big respect.

Q: What else is different?

A: The way your brothers and sisters get along. It's a lot better. In culture and everything, there is a big change. You know, I've already been married into an Anglo family. So I can compare.

Q: Did you feel that you were discriminated against when you were living in L.C.?

A: No. Most of the stores are run by Mexican American people.

Q: How many Anglos are living there?

A: About one third in L.C.

Q: Did you have any trouble with the police?

A: No. Well, my brother was a cop and that's the only contact I had.

Q: Did your family ever have any difficulty with the police?

A: Oh yeah. My big brother is the main problem. He drank a lot and would get into fights with the whole family. He finally got married and settled down.

Q: What does Mexico mean to you? Have you travelled there?

A: Yes, I got as far as Júarez.

Q: Did you like it?

A: No. People try to take advantage of you down there.

Q: Did they consider you an American?

A: Yeah. An American. In other words, you're just like an Anglo.

Q: If somebody asked you, "What is your country?", what would you say?

A: The United States.

Q: If I asked you, "Who are you really? What are you really?"

A: Chicano.

Q: You prefer the word "Chicano" to "Mexican American"?

A: Yeah. Because you weren't really born in Mexico, so you aren't really a Mexican American.

Q: Do you know where the term "Chicano" comes from?

A: No. But I remember that when I was in high school, that was when I started picking up the word "Chicano". That was 1970.

Q: Were you taught Chicano history in your high school?

A: Not at all.

Q: Were you taught Spanish?

A: They only had one Spanish class, the whole school.

Q: Did you ever have contacts with your grandparents? Were they still living with you when you were in L.C.?

A: The only one that's living now is my grandmother. She knows Spanish, of course.

Q: Was she very Mexican to you?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you feel close to your grandparents?

A: Yes, very close.

Q: Were they that part of the family which gave you the traditional values?

A: No, they didn't teach us that. I just learned speaking Spanish from them.

Q: Did they like the U.S.?

A: My grandmother did. I didn't know my other grandparents. They were dead when I was born.

Q: Would you consider yourself a Roman Catholic?

A: [Pause] Yes, I'm a Roman Catholic, but I'm not a churchgoer.

Q: Do you believe in God, in life after death, in the Saints?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you pray to the Saints?

A: Not any longer. I stopped when I came into the Army.

Q: Do you believe that the Saints can help you if you're in trouble?

A: Yes, that's what my grandma taught us.

Q: Did you have a little altar in the house with the Saints on it?

A: No, just a wall with the Saints on it, that was all.

Q: Are you familiar with the term "La Raza"? What does it mean?

A: "La Raza" means "the people", the Chicano people. Back home that is called "La Raza Unida", which means "Mexican American United". There is a party too like that.

Q: Do you know any Chicano organization apart from this one?

A: No.

Q: I'm giving you four names of Chicano leaders. Tell me which one you know: Chávez, Tijerina, Váldez, González.

A: Tijerina was one of the people from New Mexico, from Albuquerque. And he fought for the rights of the Mexican Americans to the land that belonged to us really, as he called it. He did a big thing in Albuquerque, broke into a courthouse, and he's in jail right now.

Q: Do you sympathize with him?

A: Yes, he was right.

Q: You said, "It was really our land." Why was it taken?

A: New Mexico was part of Mexico before.

Q: What are the claims that you have as a Chicano in this context?

A: Well, most of the people up in Albuquerque are Anglo and they put Mexicans down there. They put the Chicanos down real bad, and that's why Tijerina finally decided to fight for his rights and the rights of the people.

Q: What do you think Chicanos in New Mexico should do? What are their main problems today?

A: The main problems are in Albuquerque; they put Chicanos down there real bad, but in L.C. Chicanos are the biggest people in numbers. They're trying to pay low wages, and this and that. All the people should really get together, and, like in our college, they got organization down there. They go down there and talk, try to bring some rules and something. So all the people now are coming real close. It just started in 1970.

Q: What college ist that?

A: New Mexico State University.

Q: What are the things they should really fight for now?

A: Discrimination in jobs, that's the main thing right there.

Q: What about education?

A: In school they should teach us more about Mexican history.

Q: When you were a child and later an adolescent, who were your friends?

A: Mostly Chicanos, yeah, a few Anglos.

Q: You said you were married to an Anglo girl. How come?

A: I met her in high school, at one game. We started going together and finally ended up married.

Q: Why did you get a divorce?

A: It's kind of hard for a Mexican to keep both families happy. Like my wife didn't speak Spanish. All she could do is just sit there. When I went to her house I was ill at ease.

Q: Did that Anglo family accept you or not?

A: Not really. Her parents did not want her to go out with Chicanos. After we were married they startes calming down, you know. But they were not very cordial to me at all. I went in there, on a visit or something, it was hard being yourself, because they were the high people, real high class. Like, when I want to talk Spanish real good, they talk about something that I wouldn't know what they are talking about. And every time we had a problem, they came in all the time. Like, my wife would talk to her mom - that same night they would be at my house. And I had to accept what they wanted. My wife and they wanted the same things, so I said O.K.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: Let's see. We had an argument about a home. I was gonna buy a home. And they said no, because, "We'll look for a home for you." I couldn't make my own decisions, really.

Q: Did you start arguing very early in your relationship?

A: No, O.K. When we were first married, we went to overseas, we went to Okinawa. When we went back, her parents were around every weekend looking around, seeing how we're doing.

Q: And your parents, did they accept her?

A: Yeah, they would. My grandmother didn't. She said it's for Mexicans to marry Mexicans. I was the first one in my family ever to marry an Anglo. Of the whole family.

Q: Did you have any children?

A: Yes, I have a little girl. She is living with her. I'm going to get her back. I'm going home February 28 to get married to a Chicano girl.

Q: What do you think of Indians? Didn't the Indians too have land in that section of the U.S.?

A: Yeah, I don't know. Most of the Indians are up in Arizona, so there wasn't that many around.

Q: Do you know that Mexicans have a mixed heritage?

A: Yes, of Indian and Spanish and some other things. It doesn't bother me at all having some Indian blood.

Q: What would your reaction be if one of your sisters would marry a blond, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon Protestant?

A: It depends on her, really, but my parents would feel pretty bad. After my marriage they won't.

Q: Did you feel that you and your wife were differing also in your religious views?

A: Yes. She was a Lutheran. We went to a Catholic mass. Catholics think that's a religion, but when she went with me she didn't like it at all.

Q: Did you ever go to her church also?

A: No, never did.

Q: How close do you feel to Mexico?

A: Close? It's a place to visit, that's it.

Q: Is it strange to you?

A: Right.

Q: Have you ever heard of the "Brown Berets"?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: What do they mean to you?

A: They are Chicanos, starting up, you know, starting up together to put down discrimination, I guess.

Q: What are their methods? Do you object to it or not?

A: No.

Q: Do you think it is necessary?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Do you think Chicanos are strong enough or ever will be strong enough some day to actively fight discrimination that way?

A: Well, the boys have been going pretty strong.

Q: Do you feel that Chicanos should unite with Blacks?

A: No, because the Blacks keep to themselves and the Chicanos keep to themselves.

Q: If you had the power to change things really in America, what would you change; which institutions, for example?

A: /Laugh/ If I really had the power, mainly about work. There are Chicanos who got the knowledge and they do the work, but there is a certain point they will get to and that's all. When you try to be boss, O.K., the bosses are all Anglos. I'd change discrimination in the police force. Most of the problems are in Albuquerque. When they bring a Chicano in he gets beaten up pretty bad.

Q: Anglos are not beaten up usually?

A: No, they get off easy, really.

Q: So you think it's the poor who suffer rather than the rich?

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: What about the big industries, the big factory owners? What would you do about them?

A: Ah, we don't have big factories down there but, O.K., there are bosses down there that, as I said, are Anglos. There's some Mexicans, Chicanos, there.

Q: Do you think that Chicano bosses would be nicer than Anglo bosses?

A: I think that Chicano bosses, you know, do their job a lot better.

Q: Why?

A: They work harder at it. Because keeping a job for a Chicano is good, especially if he has a big family.

Q: What should be done against violence and insecurity in the streets?

A: The police force should be bigger. Like, in our home town there's a small police force.

Q: I am sure you have heard of law and order. What do you think it is? Are you in favor of it?

A: Yes, I am in favor of it, because somebody got to keep order for the people.

Q: Do you think it has been used well so far?

A: No. Not at all. Law and order isn't that good any more. Like, reading a newspaper, you see how everything is getting outa hand back in the States.

Q: We were talking about changing things through violence for Chicanos. Now Anglos will say, "This is law and order. We don't want this."

A: That's their law and order. That's theirs. Some laws are O.K.. Like, an Anglo gets drunk, gets put into jail for about an hour or two, and gets out. But a Chicano has a bigger penalty to pay, gets fined, has to stay in jail for some time. It's a big problem, but I think there should be one Chicano policeman to every two Anglo policemen to see that Chicanos are not discriminated or beaten up.

Q: What do you expect from your wife?

A: Be truthful, be a good mother.

Q: Does she have to be a virgin, keep a good home?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you in favor of sexual experiences before marriage?

A: Yes, for men, but not for a woman.

Q: Who is the girl then that you want to have your experiences with?

A: It would be hard to say. Anyone, I guess.

Q: Do you want her to work outside the house?

A: [Pause] Not in a factory, not at all. She should stay at home. Because this girl that I want to marry, she wants to work.

Q: In the house you want to be the boss?

A: We both should be the boss.

Q: But let's suppose you have different opinions, who decides?

A: I decide finally. Right.

Q: Suppose you were engaged to a girl and she offers you a chance to go to bed with her, would you do it or not?

A: I would wait.

Q: Will you be truthful as a husband also?

A: Yes, I will.

Q: Have you heard of the word "machismo"?

A: I've heard of it but I don't know what it means really.

Q: What are the ideas, the values, you would fight for?

A: Just my pride, you know. Just myself right now. I don't want to be discriminated.

Q: You would fight physically if someone would insult you.

A: No. I would talk back, say the same thing about his race.

Q: Has this happened to you?

A: Yes. A high school teacher. She taught English.

Q: Who ran that high school of yours?

A: Anglos. She said something to me, I don't remember what it was, and I told her, "You're a dirty white woman", and she took me to the principal and we talked. I almost got kicked out of high school, but I called my Spanish teacher, called him in, and we talked about it, and the Anglo teacher was in the wrong. They tried to discriminate Mexicans down there.

Q: In your class, were the majority of the students Anglos or Mexicans?

A: Anglos. In my English class there was two Mexicans and one Negro, and the rest were white.

Q: Did your hear nasty things from other students too?

A: No, we got along pretty well.

Q: How do you want to raise your children?

A: Just as long as they have respect for their parents.

Q: What would you as a father want to give them?

A: A good home, something for the future. Education is important, very important, especially for us as a minority.

Q: What is a "good home" for you?

A: You know, you have food and money in the bank, and enough room for yourself and your kids.

Q: What does a good life mean to you? How do you want to live once you have a steady job and a family?

A: I just want to go back to L.C. and buy a home. I want to live out in the country, away from the city, because there's big discrimination. In the country you're by yourself nice and quiet.

Q: What kind of a job would you like to have?

A: I want to go into the police force, like my brother.

Q: Who in your family has taught you anything?

A: My big brother, really. He took care of me really when I got out of the house during high school.

Q: Do you think America is a racist country?

A: Yeah, it is.

Q: Who profits from racism?

A: Big people. People that got money.

Q: Do you think they want to keep racism up?

A: Now they're trying to do away with it, but I doubt it, because there are a lot of people that discriminate people, really.

Q: Do you think there has been any progress made against racism lately?

Q: I haven't noticed any, really. In L.C. there is a big store called Rayburn's. The boss is an Anglo, the others, the stock people in the back, are Chicanos. No Chicanos are in front. They can't do nothing yet, because he can't prove it. When the people come, they call them survey, he pulls them up, but after that they go back again.

Q: Do you feel that Blacks are moving too fast, are getting too much support?

A: Yeah. Chicanos are getting some, but not as much support as the Blacks are.

Q: Do you know what "Black Nationalism" means?

A: No.

Q: But you know what "Black Power" means. Are you in favor of it?

A: Yeah, against the white people, yes. Because they've been discriminating.

Q: Would you join a protest march if there was one for Chicano rights?

A: Yeah.

Q: Would you join a violent protest also?

A: If we got to a point when it's got to violence, yes, I would.

Q: What would that point be? When do you think it would be worthwhile?

A: If I saw a couple of Anglo policemen jump on a Chicano and beat him up, yes, I'll get to that point.

Q: Which institution, or group, or political party do you think has helped your minority most: State governments, police, Blacks, churches, Congress, TV, courts?

A: None of them.

Q: Who has helped Chicanos?

A: "La Raza Unida Party", that's the main, big one.

Q: Which group do you think hurts Chicanos most?

A: The police. The police is part of State government, I guess.

Q: Which of the following leaders do you like best: Carmichael, King, Guevara, Castro, J.F. Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", the "Black Muslims", Reies Tijerina?

A: Tijerina, by far.

Q: Who would be the second one?

A: Martin Luther King.

Q: Which national political party did or would you vote for?

A: None. It's no good any more.

Q: Are you superstitious?

A: Yes, very. Down by the river there's a lady that all children will hear crying. That's a big superstition. Never go down there at night, because there is that lady who lost her children. Every night she goes through the river looking for children. I wouldn't walk through a cemetery at night. I also think there are witches.

Q: Have you ever seen one?

A: In the newspaper, that's about it.

Q: Do you believe that the Devil exists?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you believe that he can take on human shape?

A: Yes, he can.

Q: Have you seen one?

A: I thought I did once. I was coming home from church. This was when I was about in the seventh grade. There is two cemeteries on each side of the road, right down the middle. And my brother went up ahead of me, and I kept looking, and I couldn't find him, and I came up on him, lying on the ground, and I tried to wake him up, and he turned around, and his eyes were big and red, and I told him,I said, "Geez". He didn't say nothing, he just started coming towards me. I just ran home, ran home and asked him. He said he don't remember. That was about nine o'clock at night. It wasn't him. You could tell it wasn't him. His body was there, but it wasn't him.

Q: Do you know of any other incident of this kind?

A: This is a story that happened on Halloween, at a Halloween dance in about 1960. There is a big old dance hall by the cemetery. And a man showed up in red, dressed all red. And they said he touched the people's face and they started bleeding. And the thing about it, when I went outside, there was police cars all over the place. They say it was a spirit, because when they tried to find him, they locked the doors and everything, and he wasn't in there.

Q: How many people did he scratch?

A: About four of them. They had to close the place down, it's closed down now. This happered every two Saturdays, at Halloween and after that a couple of nights.

Q: Were there any "curanderos" or "curanderas" in your town?

A: What do you mean by that?

Q: It's a person who cures with herbs, unguents and spirits.

A: There is none down there.

Q: Do you believe in your dreams?

A: Yes. I dreamed once that something was gonna happen to me. And that I was going to meet somebody. And a couple of weeks later I met the person. And I said, "Didn't I meet you before?" And he said, "No." And it was in a dream, really. Like, sometimes it sounds like it's gonna happen, by curiosity or what, I don't know, but it happens.

Q: Did you ever smoke hash or marihuana?

A: No, never. I don't even smoke.

Q: When did you have your first girl in your life?

A: When I went to bed with her? That was in high school. I was about seventeen, eighteen.

Q: Did you talk her into it or was she the instigator?

A: I guess, we both were, because we were both drunk. It was after a party. Chicanos back home throw big parties. It was in the car.

6. Arthur S.
23 years
V., Cal./Tucson, Phoenix, Ariz. (E)

Q: Where are you from?

A: I'm from a town that's about sixty-five miles north of Los Angeles, along the coast.

Q: Is it a big place?

A: Oh, a population of about thirty thousand.

Q: Is the town mainly Chicano, or Anglo, or mixed?

A: It is a mixed population, very little Blacks and about five per cent Mexicans and a few Indians, and that's all. The rest is Anglo-Saxon.

Q: Could you tell me about your family, did your parents immigrate from Mexico?

A: I can't tell you, but my grandfather on my mother's side immigrated from Chihuahua when he was a little boy. In fact it was so long ago, that he saw a train and he thought it was the Devil himself coming down the railroad tracks. And my father's grandfather came from Guadalajara. He migrated to Santo Diego. That's also in California. And my mother's father, my grandfather, moved to V. My father, during the war, his family moved to Los Angeles after they migrated from San Diego and he worked there for a while. And when World War II came my parents moved to the country and there my parents met. And both families were field workers, worked on farms all the time, and small parcels of land, and so forth.

Q: How old are your parents approximately?

A: My father is about forty-eight, my mother is about forty-two.

Q: Are they working?

A: My father joined the Air Force when he was young, about seventeen, and my mother married my father not out of love, but out of trying to escape from my grandfather. She told me in her own words. And my father spent twenty-three years in his life in the Air Force and in those years my mother saw him about ten.

Q: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

A: Most Chicano families have large families but we, being assimilated into more like a Anglo culture and having to be around Anglo-Saxon people, there was only three of us, my brother, my sister, and me. I'm the youngest.

Q: Could you tell anything about aunts, uncles, cousins, or about any experiences that they told you, that struck you as a child or as a young man?

A: I grew up into my father's family, not my mother's, mostly. Maybe one year out of my life I spent with my mother's parents, most of my life I spent with my other grandparents. My father has three brothers and a sister, and from them I learned that I must struggle, and work, and read the Bible. And as the years passed, they all changed, very much so. One of my uncles is a big contractor in San Diego. He runs back and forth over the Tijuana, and works with the Mexican people. He tells me, "Work hard!" My other uncle, he works in the shipyard. He also works hard, makes a lotta money, has a nice house. He has also been assimilated. Both uncles have been assimilated. I have another uncle who lives in Los Angeles now, he is the vice president of a company. He has also been assimilated. He also believes that I should work hard in the Anglo-Saxon culture. My father thinks that I should work hard in the Anglo-Saxon culture. He has also been assimilated.

Q: Are they all Protestant?

A: Yes, they are all Protestant.

Q: When did your family convert to the Protestant faith?

A: I asked my grandmother about it once, and that's my father's mother. She told me a story about one day being in church, a Catholic church. And how people go to church every day, sin on one day, go to confession that day, tell their sins, and go out into the street and commit the same sin. She saw this over and over for maybe three years she was going into the Catholic church. She believed in God so much in her own way that she thought that this was being a hypocrite. So she left the Catholic church and went to the Protestant church. My grandfather was in and out of prisons, my mother's father, whom I'm closest to, and most people say I'm like. He's been in prison a couple of times, he got out of prison, and he distinctly went to church believing that this would be the almighty recovery-being a drug addict, a sinner and everything. So he became a Methodist.

Q: What would you say are the main differences between an Anglo family and a Chicano family?

A: The main difference between an Anglo family and a Spanish, a Chicano family, is that if I wanted to date a white girl from a white family it would be very difficult, and if she wanted to date me it would also be difficult. But the main difference, I think, is in opportunities in the families, say, to get a job. Because most Anglo-Saxons have been well established while Chicano families have been there a long time but have been denied certain opportunities, which my uncles think we aren't denied as long as we work hard.

Q: How was it in your family? Did your father impose his will on the family or in the house, on the children, or was it the mother who determined what happened?

A: In all the years I spent with my parents I still do not know which ruled the house. One day it would be my mother; one day it would be my father. They were being assimilated.

We were away from most Chicanos and Chicano families plus our own families, so my parents assimilated what was around them. If they thought the mother would be the house and then that day my dad, my dad would yell. The next day my mother would be out talking to some other families, Black, white, or whatever, Caucasian, then she would be the boss that day, so. And my family, there's not really anyone who wears the pants, it's just who does the yelling that day.

Q: Suppose your father had a mistress. How would your mother react?

A: I'm glad you asked me that, because I told you that my mother only married my father to escape her grandfather. She told me that when I was about eighteen years old. My parents had separated by then. And my mother told me that when I was a small kid, about two years old, in Tucson where I was born, my dad went out on her one day. That was the last straw. That was it. She would never forgive my dad for what he had done. So she told me in her own words that the only reason why my parents stayed together was because of us. And they had arguments sometimes that, I mean, they would go after each other with knives and whatever, and all this time I thought it was just little things, but it was always that one thing that started this argument for fifteen years of life. That's all I can tell you.

Q: Who were your playmates in that town when you were, say, between four and eight years old?

A: When I was about four years old we moved from Tucson, where I was born, in '51, to Phoenix. And in Phoenix we lived in a project. In this project there was not only Browns that lived there, not only Blacks that lived there, not only whites, but a complete combination. So at an early age I was, I was confronted with both Blacks, Browns and whites, so I played with both. I did not have one single race that I played with. I know things from whites, I knew things from Blacks, I knew things from Browns; I just didn't have one race to play with.

Q: Could you tell us anything about your experiences in school?

A: As a little kid in school I knew right off that there was a difference, not just in color, but in what other people wore. I noticed that I didn't dress as well as other kids did, but I had it better than other families did. And I always noticed that in teachers alone there was always a greater emphasis on whites to leran than the teacher trying to teach, say, minority races. When it was time for open house and the parents would look at things, you know, there would be always the teacher talking to a white children's parents, rather than speaking with the Spanish or Black kid's parents, because it was primarily a white school and it was just that way, no matter how good you did or how progressed in class.

Q: Were students allowed to talk Spanish to each other in class?

A: No, we were not. Only English was taught when I was between those grades. If Spanish was talked it was thought of as you cussing somebody, or saying bad things behind somebody's back. So it was really not very much liked. In fact, I had a case once. I moved to my grandmother's at San Diego and, like, I had been assimilated by the Anglo-Saxon race, so I used a lot more English than what most Mexicans or Chicanos do that came to San Diego. Sometimes my teacher had problems with this one Mexican. In fact, he was a lot more whiter and Anglo-Saxon than I, but when it came to speaking English it was really hard for him. So he would always have this thing of getting so frustrated where he couldn't understand something. He would get out of the class, and run out, and run away, and there would be tears in his eyes. And my teacher would go, "Go get 'im. You know how to speak Spanish." So off I ran and tried to get him. She never wanted to, in fact, she was afraid of him.

Q: Were you taught in school anything about Mexican history or cultural values?

A: Oh yes, we were taught that most Chicanos and Mexicans lay by cactuses, wear sombreros, lay in the shade, hang around in bars; usually bandidos or robbers.

Q: Did you have any contacts with institutions, such as the police, or lawyers or the city administration?

A: All my life I've been confronted by mostly white lawyers, policemen, landlords and so forth. I start with landlords. When I was a little kid I used to live in a project, like I said. At one time my brother and I were playing with the landlord's son. And my brother threw him down on the ground, and I guess he hit it the wrong way, and the kid broke his arm. So the landlord came over and my mother came out. He raised hell and said he would put us in jail. And my mother looked at him. And he said that because we broke his arm we should be put in jail. My mother, she didn't know what was right and what was wrong in law, 'cause she just didn't know. So obviously, he scared my mother. When my father came home he went up to the man and told him how much he wanted to pay for the doctor bill. The man said no, he was going to put my dad in jail. My dad said, "All right, I won't pay anything. We'll go to court and settle it." The man said, "No, no, no, I'll take the money." So my dad gave him the money. So he forgot about the broken arm.

About police. In Los Angeles most of the policemen may be Black, may be Brown, may be white, but about five years ago, no, not five, maybe eight years ago, they were all white policemen. They stop a lot of Chicanos, search their arms, 'cause they know that every Chicano is a junkie, or smokes pot, or is fencing hot articles or so forth. They hang around most Mexican bars, they lay off any white bars; they lay off any white restaurants where anything might be happening like selling dope, and the majority of policemen that I know are out for themselves just like everybody else. So if it's a minority that's causing the trouble, which they think, they look after the minority. If your dad lives on the East side of town and you live on the West side which is mostly Black and Brown, then you can smoke dope on the East side, sell dope on the East side and not get into trouble. And most of the cops are on the West side where nobody has enough bread to buy a lid anyway.

Lawyers and courts. In Califorria, most Chicanos have experienced both courts and lawyers, law and order; whatever you want to call it. And in court, there's a thing that we call "let's-make-a-deal". And in this "let's-make-a-deal", it's like you commit a crime, a misdemeanor; they offer you a public defender to defend you in court. The only thing they don't tell you is that the public defender is the D.A.'s best cousin, and not only that, he's trying to buck for D.A. himself. So, when you have these little "let's-make-a-deal" things you go to court and your public defender says to the judge, "We've made a deal. This man is going to give up such and such, and spend sixty days in jail instead of a year, and gets such and such a fine instead of this." So.

In reality, the public defender is fucking you and, in turn, the D.A. is getting what he wants. So, this always happens. But, in reality, I'll tell you a story about me and a friend. This friend of mine is a white Anglo-Saxon. He hung around with a lot of Mexicans, because he himself worked with them in M. Product Company. His dad died in an accident, drove his Jaguar one night, drunk, and killed himself. So him and his mother inherited all the money. He wasn't a rich brat at all, 'cause his dad was really rough on him, and stuff. But he and me hung around a lot with each other, we got in trouble with each other, we were almost like brothers. But there was one thing, his name. In that town his name meant a whole lot. He lived on the East side of town. I lived on the West side of town. I met him one time at a dance in a rec-center that's a midway between town where everybody meets everybody from the East side, and everybody meets everybody from the West side. And we just happened to be cruising on the avenue, that's the main drag, and we got pulled over, got searched. They found a couple joints, so we ended up in jail. This was the shortest time of the times that I spent in jail. I spent one hour and fifty minutes. He called up his mother and by that time the D.A. was down there and both of us were out of jail, you know what I mean. That is law and order in V. county. If you got money, money talks.

Q: Do you still speak Spanish?

A: I've been asked that by whites as well as Browns and by Blacks. My father was in the service, I was in Tucson, then in Phoenix, from there I moved to Germany in 1958, didn't come back till '61. [illegible] a Chicano within, I'd say, five thousand miles. I didn't need the language, most of my friends were Anglos. I didn't speak it, Spanish was not taught, and when I went back again my father was not stationed in California where I could be associated with most Spanish speaking people. Instead, my father was stationed in Minnesota; the nearest Spanish speaking is about twenty eight hundred miles away. So I did not need the language; my life did not need the language. I did not need the Spanish language to live every day, so in a way, it drifted away. I took Spanish classes. passed with A's. No need to talk fluent Spanish with anybody except the Spanish teacher.

Q: What does the word "La Raza" mean to you?

A: I was confronted with the word "La Raza" in 1969. Most kids in my college and high school were wearing brown berets and thinking "La Raza" as Blacks were thinking "Black Power". I was confronted by many Chicanos who were in the movement and asked me, what did I think what "La Raza" meant to myself. To me, it's dignity for our people, telling people that we're here as a people and we wanna be something; we wanna own something. We were here before you were here. We are a mixed race now but part of us was here before the other part was here. And all we want is what belongs to us. And we have to do it by picketing, violence, or whatever. I think my people are, I think it's time that they're gonna do something about it. That's what "La Raza" means to me.

Q: Are you in favor of getting things through physical violence?

A: I myself am a violent person and there is a lot of Chicanos that are violent. And I think this violence comes from not being able to communicate between the two races. Like I said, being bilingual, the Chicano cannot express himself sometimes in English as he wants to be expressed. In turn he turns around and he uses violence. So that's the way that he has to express himself. Like the riots they had in L.A. where the TV man was killed; I don't remember his name, this same thing happened. They couldn't express themselves like they wanted to say. It led to violence.

Q: Do you think that getting hold of institutions, getting Chicano people into the system would be a good thing in order to change things?

A: Yes. If a lot of my people got into, say: administrative positions, political positions, teaching positions, community type positions, it would help our race a lot. But there's a lot I can say about not helping us.

Q: Which of the three well-known Chicano leaders do you feel closest to and why: Chávez, Tijerina, González?

A: The last two gentlemen I've never been familiar with. Chávez, I've heard of him the last eight years since he was himself a migrant worker, and I'm for what he's for, because I myself worked in the fields, I myself picked strawberries, picked lemons, oranges, planted fruit trees, worked in packing houses. I know what those people go through. I did it during vacation when I was going to school. I started in the eighth grade. And when you see those people come from across the border or just migrant workers from Texas or Arizona, and you see how they're not getting anything and how hard they work, you just, you wonder, you know, if something is gonna happen for these people. And César Chávez wants something to happen and he wants to have it now, and as you can see, or as you have read, there is violence happening, because these people need somebody like César Chávez to guide them. And when he's not there, it's violence; it's complete violence.

Q: How are the relationships between Indians and Chicanos in your region?

A: There's very few Indians where I come from. I've never been in contact with Indians, or their way of life, or anything till recently, so I can't really say.

Q: Do you feel that Chicanos and Indians should work together and fight together for their rights?

A: That's like saying that Blacks and Browns should work together. It will never happen. They think different than most Chicanos and they think of it in their own way. And they're out for what they want.

Q: Do you feel that you have an Indian as well as a Spanish heritage?

A: /Pause/ I know I have an Indian heritage, but it hasn't been stressed as much as my Spanish and Mexican heritage. That's kinda confusing things, 'cause in my mind I know that I'm Spanish and Indian but not the so-called Indian that most people think about, Apache, Navajo and so forth.

A: Do you accept that mixed heritage: the mestizo culture and race?

A: Yes, I accept that race. I've always said that I am of Spanish and Indian race and that's what I am, a Chicano; of Spanish and Indian race.

Q: What are your feelings about Mexico? Would you consider it your homeland?

A: /Pause/ I consider Mexico a nice place to visit but I do not consider it my heritage. Only in that my grandfather came from Chihuahua and my other grandfather came from Guadalajara. That's where it ends. I am from California. I was born in the United States and that's where I am from.

Q: What do you think are the major problems of the Chicano people today?

A: I think the greatest problem is communication, like I said before. It's hard for my people to communicate with the English speaking people when the English speaking people in an educational system do not accept our language as they accept their own, and teach a kid that has been raised in Spanish from one to five or six years old, and then turn around and teach him English. He cannot understand it if he is brought up in a Chicano family. I had that advantage my father being in the service, being associated with Anglo-Saxons.

Q: What are the qualities that you expect from your future wife?

A: I think the only thing that I really expect from my wife is that she loves me.

Q: That she obeys you?

A: Oh, dogs obey. I think it would have to be - I don't know how to say -

Q: A partnership?

A: Yes, a partnership, that's it. When my parents got divorced I myself believed that marriage was wrong because my parents went through it. But in my heart I don't believe in marriage. I believe in love. So, that's all I can say.

Q: What are the essential things that you want your children to learn from you as a father?

A: I think what I would teach my children is that they are as equal as anybody else on earth and that if they try hard enough, they have every opportunity they want: if they just want it. If they want it bad enough it's there and they'll get it. That's the only thing, I think, I want to teach my kids, because life will teach them the rest. Your parents sometimes try to teach you, but in trying to teach you they destroy other things that you should have in life.

Q: What are your major criticism of white society in America? What would you change, for example, if you had the power to change things?

A: Ah, if I had the power to change things I don't think I'd change anything. There is something inside of me that says that destiny will change whatever has to be changed. People and time - it takes time for things to happen; time for people to realize that another man is as equal as them; that another race is as educated and well established as they are. Education itself, that's what I think will help everything. Just learning, and knowing, and understanding other peoples and cultures.

Q: What are your plans for the future? How far did you get with your studies, and how do you want to use them?

A: I went to about the second year in college and finally gave up on myself, I guess, and came in the Army. I owed some money, like everybody owes money, and ended up in the Army. But when I get out - I like art. I was an art major and I guess that's what I'll go back to.

Q: What exactly do you see yourself doing as an art major?

A: Technical designing, building, clothes: anything, furniture.

Q: You being a so-called "assimilated Chicano", what were your relationships with Chicanos who never left the "barrio" or who stayed fundamentally Chicano in their ways?

Q: When I lived in Minnesota and moved back to California I arrived at a junior high school. As soon as I got there, there was a Spanish girl that was a Chicana girl and right away it was, "Who dressed you, your mother?" And I couldn't understand what she was saying, she kept saying this, you know, "Who dressed you, your mother?" And I wondered what she meant and I went up to her and said, "What do you mean?" "Look," she says, "You're wearing the same colored socks as you're shirt." I said, "What's wrong with that?" "You don't do that here," you know, "You're a Chicano, you're supposed to wear khakies and wear a beanie and wear a Pendleton, and you know."

Q: What's a Pendleton?

A: It's a wool type shirt, pad and khakies are regular khakies with Continental shoes, you know. Me, I came with penny loafers and high water pants. And I'd walk around in the halls and they would go, "Are you waiting for the flood?" And I said, "Waiting for the flood?" And I went around two months asking myself, because I didn't want to ask anybody. I didn't want to ask any of the Chicanos, 'cause I didn't want to feel stupid. Well, I finally call up my cousin and I go, "Why do these people keep telling me, why am I waiting for the flood?"

"Because of your pants!" And I go, "What?" The next day I went down to J.C. Penny's and bought me a long pair of pants. So from that day on I wasn't wearing any high water pants. And Chicanos, when I first got there, right off knew that I wasn't with them in different ways. I didn't live with them and I didn't do things as Chicanos did. I didn't speak fluent Spanish, and they let me know. I got in fights a lot in the restroom, got in fights over girls. It was, in some ways, I was something better than what they were and they were mad. And the only way they could express this was by violence, like I told you before.

Q: Who were your friends then?

A: Ah, my friends were Hawaians, Blacks and halfbreeds, if you want to call them that: trick babies. Trick babies pertains to people that, say, are of Chicano or Black race that don't look like it. And I use the word "pollo", and "pollo" is looking like a Chicano, not dressing like one, but looking like one and should be one, but not dressing like one and not speaking like one. And that's what I was when I arrived. I'll give an example of these grievances I had between myself and Chicanos when I arrived in California. My cousin asked me to go to a party once, totally Chicano, no whites. It was a wedding reception for a white young man and a woman that was a Chicana herself, who were getting married. And the only whites in the whole place were his parents. All others were Chicanos. My cousin had stressed that I should get involved with the Chicanos: I should become a Chicano. So I said, "This is what I want to be. I've come, this is it; I want to marry a Chicano woman. I don't want to be assimilated, I've been gone too long." I was thinking this when I was in the eighth grade. So I went to the party. When I arrived there I danced, I danced different than they did; I wore different clothes than they did; I might even have held my glass different than they did; I laughed at different jokes, and so forth. They had a break between the dance and everybody went outside. The girls went to one side and talked, and the boys went to the other. So I went with the other and I was talking to Chicanos and the next thing I know, one Chicano walked up to me and, "You think that's funny?" And I go, "Yeah, I think that's funny." And he blew smoke in my face and the next thing I knew, there was a fist coming through that smoke and hitting me square in the mouth. The next thing I know, I was choking him and we were on the ground. The next thing I know is I was being kicked - if it wasn't for my cousin I would have been dead. And that's - it was so hard for me to communicate. The harder I tried to communicate with my own Chicano race, it seemed like the more I was being rejected. Maybe in my own mind I thought I was being rejected, but all those symptoms and everything else seemed that I wasn't accomplishing my goal. Finally I gave it up and just hung around with surfers and halfbreeds and Blacks, and did my own thing, away from the Chicano community which eliminated me from itself.

Q: What are the relationships between Chicanos and Mexicans, and Chicanos and Puerto Ricans?

A: Most Puerto Ricans think that Chicanos have given up their dignity, and that they have been assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon race, not only in dress and in customs and so forth, but in even giving up their language by not stressing that they be used in school and so forth. And Mexican people from Mexico that migrate into California themselves believe the same way as the "puertorriqueño". The Chicanos that are all in California are "pollos"; they have been assimilated so much that they themselves neglect the Mexican, or the Puerto Rican worker, or families that move there. They have their own problems to worry about there, it's up to them. They come from a world where "mejicanos" help "mejicanos", "puertorriqueños" help "puertorriqueños". So when a "mejicano" comes to California and sees a Chicano family that has a good house and a good car, he thinks, "This man must help me, we're of the same race". But the Chicano that has lived in California does not think that way. He thinks as the Anglo-Saxon, "I've earned what I've earned, I don't have to share it with anybody." And most Chicanos that have made something of themselves think the same way. If the person wants it, he should get it. Why should be give up something? I think that "puertorriqueños" think that about Chicanos, but there are Chicanos that will help "puertorriqueños" as well as Chicanos. They only think of a stereotyped Chicano, giving up his language, giving up his heritage and so forth.

7. Hernán F.
   20 years
   Mexico City/F., Cal. (E)

Q: When did you come to the U.S.?

A: Ah, I don't remember the exact month, but I'm pretty sure it was in the year 1956.

Q: Your whole family moved?

A: Right.

Q: And where did you got then in the States?

A: We moved to F., California, we lived in F. for about - I don't remember, but from F. we moved to D., a residential area.

Q: Where is that, which larger town is close to it?

A: Do you know where Watts, California is at? It's right across the tracks from there. I lived about two blocks from Watts.

Q: Why do you think your parents left Mexico?

A: Well, looking for a job, right?

Q: What kind of a job did they find?

A: My father, well, he's a truck driver, he's always been a truck driver. But down in Mexico he was a poster; then he came over here to the States looking for a postal job. Then he found a truck driving job and he's been with that firm for about twelve years now.

Q: Did your mother work also?

A: No, housewife.

Q: How many kids were in your family?

A: I got one older brother and two older sisters. So all in all there's six.

Q: Was Spanish spoken at home?

A: All the time.

Q: Did your parents learn English?

A: Yeah, everybody knows English, but my mom, she's kind of shy of speaking English. My dad is pretty fluent with it. Everybody else is, too.

Q: So you went to school there also and you went to a high school?

A: Right.

Q: Did you have Spanish language instruction in high school?

A: Well, you could have taken Spanish courses, but that was up to you, so, like electives. But I never took it.

Q: Do you know how to read and write Spanish?

A: Well, I never took classes, but my mom, she writes to me and if I look at it, you know, I could make out the words and I could read it slow, but I'd get the point across.

Q: You don't write Spanish yourself?

A: If I look at a word, if I have a word on mind I try to write it down for the best that everybody can understand it. But I don't know if it's right or wrong; most times I do get my points across.

Q: Did you stay in one house or did you move around a lot?

A: No, we stayed in one house.

Q: What do you think is different in an Anglo family from a Mexican immigrant family?

A: Well, we lived on a dead end block. See, there were only about, well, there was a division like a crossing street, and I never went on that side of the street. I always stayed on my dead end side. And as I started growing, more Mexican families started moving in on the block. So when I was small I always hung around my Anglo friend. And I never knew the parents very well, 'cause the father was in the Navy, he stayed in the Navy for twenty years. And the mother was always away from home. And the older brothers always had school, so I was mostly with the younger guy, and we hung around together all the time. But he'd always come to my house and spend the night and eat. And I'd always go to his house. But I didn't see too many differences, like I said, I didn't meet too many white families. But as far as his family and mine was concerned, they got along good, just fine.

Q: Were there difficulties between Mexican families and Anglo families on that street?

A: No.

Q: What about Mexicans and Blacks, did they get along?

A: Well, all my life, that's the only race that's ever given me any trouble. Like, I'd go to a liquor store, I'd walk inside a liquor store and I'd look outside the window, and I'd see a place swarming with Blacks. And they'd stop and say "Hey, boy, let me have that candy!" And they snatched the bag from me and they, well, they would rob me, in other words. And, like, we'd be riding our bikes, just then I'd hang around mostly with Mexicans, we'd be riding our bikes and all of a sudden about ten guys would come after us trying to catch us for our bikes. And, like, we had these little race cars and we'd go race them, and, like, the track was real long and they could get on the other side of the track, and when a car came by they'd grab a hold of the car and run out the front door. For me the biggest problem in life was the Black family, I mean the Blacks themselves. Like the school I went to, my high school, it was, they called it, All American City. I don't know why, but when I was in ninth grade there was no Blacks at all. When I was in tenth grade there was one Black. And when I saw him I didn't pay too much attention to what was going on, but one thing I did notice. I had him in my P.E. class. I knew the white guys, "Hey, we got a new friend", make friends with him, but after a week they would find out that he'd be just a sissy, and later they'd always turn around and say, "Oh, that nigger."

They would first meet him then after they'd find out what kind of person he was, they would spit back in his face. I thought that was wrong. And then, when I graduated there was racial riots. I don't know who started, either the Blacks got mad at the whites or the whites got mad at the Blacks. I don't know who started, but as far as I was concerned with the whites I never had any problem with them, just with the Blacks.

Q: You know that people are poor in Watts. Do you think it was their fault? Were they lazy or why were they so poor?

A: Well, maybe they weren't given the chances. They could have been given, but then again I was working with a lot of Blacks when I got out of high school, and to me they were lazy. Once the foreman turned away, they would sit down.

Q: What kind of work would you do?

A: I was a forklift operator. But one thing got me mad, my brother was my foreman and so, you know, I wasn't doing the work because he was just my foreman, because I figure if you got to do something, you better do it, you know. 'Cause that way nobody gets in a hassle. But then they would get me mad, because they weren't screwing anybody but my brother. So it worked two ways, I don't know.

Q: You wouldn't mind your sister getting married to a Black?

A: Well, I think it would be totally up to her. It would be her choice. She's dated a lot of guys but she has never dated a Black guy.

Q: O.K., it's up to her, but how would you feel? Would you prefer a white or a Chicano?

A: My own feelings, I'd like it if she stuck with a Mexican.

Q: And why?

A: Well, it wouldn't really bother me whom she married, but I feel I would have more in common with this guy, as far as things are done. But I wouldn't object to her marrying a Black.

Q: Is there anyone in your family that you find interesting or that impressed you as a child or as an adolescent?
A: Yeah, my brother again, like I said. Like, my dad, too. He would always tell me, like, if I would be working with him, he'd always tell me "Goddammit, if you got to do something, do it right the first time!" And as I started growing, I'd start seeing his points, his points of view. And then, what really interests me about the man, I had a Volkswagen. He's mechanically minded, not because he studied but he was just born with it. I was trying to take off a nut or screw off a tire, and I couldn't do it, and I would say just, "The hell with it", and my dad would say, "No, us, we got to take this off." I'd say, "Oh, man, why do we got to do it, why do we got to do it?" One screw, it took him three hours to take it off, but he did take it off. And that always impressed me about him, that if he wanted something to get done, he would do it.
Q: What about your brother?
A: My brother, I think he only took about, maybe a semester of college and he's a foreman in a lead plant. But when he graduated he got a job down the street as a laborer, because he knew both languages, Spanish and English, they moved him up to the office. But it wasn't mental work, it was just having a steady hand, cutting patterns. I heard that in five years he'll be superintendant of the whole plant. That's pretty good, and I really look up to him. I don't know what courses he took in college, maybe he took psychology or something, to get his men to work, I don't know. I don't know what he took.
Q: Did you ever get into trouble with the police or with lawyers?
A: No, I really didn't get into trouble with the police. Like, if I felt that a cop would harass me I'd turn around.

He would tell me to do something, you know, I would do it. I was drunk, but I would try to do it. Once he started interrogating with me too much and just harassing me, I guess, I would just, just start getting smart with him. And so one time, I remember, we were with these two girls, and we got into trouble and he pulled us over.

Q: What did you do that he pulled you over?

A: Oh, we were parked, we were drinking and cops pulled over, "What are ya doin'?" We were just drinking. "Get out of the car." So we got out of the car. They go, "You know what time it is?" "Yeah, it's three o'clock in the morning." "You guys shouldn't be out this late." Yeah, yeah, oh! We were over age and we had open containers. And they go, "O.K., let's empty the beer, open the ones that aren't open, throw out the beer and we'll let you go." And that sounded fine to me, so they let us go. And as we were driving down the road, the girls had thought the cops had left, but they were right behind us, and the girls threw out the cans, and of course they pulled over again, and then we got out of the car and one guy goes, "Well, we gave you guys a chance, we're gonna have to get you guys for litterin'." No, they didn't get us for littering, they got us for being drunk, drunken in public, and then, so one cop started harassin' me. I had this Hawaian style shirt and he goes, "Where do you come from?" "I come from D.". He goes, "You sure?" I go, "Yeah." And then he could talk Spanish and he started talking about my family in Spanish. And he started talking sort of bugging but I ignored him. Then be started getting into it, real heavy. Finally I started telling him off.

Q: Did he insult your family?

A: Yeah, he started saying like, "Tu abuela es una puta" ("Your grandmother is a whore"), you know. After a while that sort of got me mad, so I got smart back with him. So he pushed me, he roughed me up a little, but I didn't hear him. So he took me to jail for drunken in public and resisting arrest. We went to court; well, the cop never appeared. The judge goes, "Well, since he didn't show up, come back next week and we'll hold it." Again, I said, "O.K." And then he never came back, so they dropped the charges. But when I was a minor I did get in trouble once for busting a light, but we beat that too. So I haven't gotten involved too heavily with the cops.

Q: Do you know what "La Raza" means?

A: Uh, "the race."

Q: Do you know about the movement "La Raza"?

A: No, I don't follow them too much.

Q: You were never involved in Chicano politics?

A: No.

Q: Would you join a protest march in favor of Mexican-American rights, for example?

A: Well, I guess you would have to know what kind of rights are on the table, before.

Q: You're not a big protest marcher by nature?

A: No.

Q: Suppose injustice were done to Chicanos in a town and they would have a violent reaction, would you join it? Would you join a riot if it is justified?

A: I could be pretty violent, but I figure there has to be really a damn good excuse for me to do it. Like, if I went to a store and they wouldn't sell me a product and they would sell the other man the product I guess I could. I'd get into it. I would try to get it verbally. Then I guess physical action would have to be taken.

Q: I'm giving you four names of Chicano leaders, let me know if you have heard of them: César Chávez, Tijerina, Váldez, Corky González.

A: I've heard of César Chávez' Farm Workers' Union, and what's that name, Corky González - that name rings a bell. Like I'm saying I'm not too involved.

Q: What do you think of Chávez, do you have any idea about him?

A: No.

Q: Are you aware of the fact that Mexicans and Mexican Americans have Indian blood? What do you think of it?

A: /Laugh/ It's there.

Q: Does it bother you?

A: It doesn't bother me.

Q: It wouldn't bother you if you were darker?

A: No, it wouldn't bother me at all.

Q: Would it bother you if you had Black blood?

A: No, no, 'cause I figure that, no, it wouldn't bother me at all, 'cause I wouldn't want anybody want to treat me for what I am.

Q: Have you ever been discriminated against for being a Mexican?

A: As far as employers are concerned, no. But there have been school, school partners, but nothing big. I mean, when I was in grammar school. I was speaking Spanish and I was talking to this guy and couldn't speak English, and this lady watching the school children during the breaks came up to us saying, "Why don't you children stop speakin' Spanish, you're not in Mexico any more!" And I was small then, you know, I didn't know how to react to that. But I look at it now, and I think that was totally none of her business. She had no right say to that.

Q: What do you identify as? What are you?

A: I am a Mexican American.

Q: Do you prefer "Mexican American" to "Chicano"?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Do you have any reason for that?

A: Well, like, if I talked to my parents and they once told me that a Chicano over there in Mexico is an ignorant Mexican. And over here people want to classify me as a Chicano, you know. It's O.K., it doesn't bother me, because, in other words I'm just saying that I am a descendant from Mexico, have Mexican blood in me. But it doesn't bother me, but I'd rather classify myself as a Mexican American.

Q: Do you think America is a racist society?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: Who do you think profits from racism in America?

A: The white now, Anglos.

Q: What do you think are the major problems of Mexican Americans or Chicanos today?

A: Well, /pause/ I don't know.

Q: What should be done in America to get rid of racism?

A: I really haven't thought about it. Like, have leaders, that could speak up for a community, but have a lot of them. Put some saying to it.

Q: Who do you think are organizations or people from the Anglo world who are very active in racism, who keep other races down?

A: No. I'm not much in politics.

Q: How close do you feel to Mexico? Is it your country, or is it a country that you visit and feel like an American?

A: I've been down there, but I myself don't like to go down there. No, I think I would have a different outlook on it now I'm older.

Q: When did you go down there last?

A: It must have been about eight years, when I was about twelve years old.

A: And you didn't feel comfortable?

A: No, not really.

Q: Why?

A: Because, first of all, I couldn't stand my cousins. They were trying to be better than me, I don't know. Like, every time I've gone down there I've always had misunderstandings with my cousins, and everything like that. Just physical misunderstandings, like, who could push who more, and stuff like that. But now that I'm a little older, I'd go down there and just take it easy down there. Like, for a vacation.

Q: If somebody asked you what is your culture, what would you say?

A: Why I think, like, an American, of course. Wait. I would tell them down there, I do eat Mexican food and, - I don't know.

Q: You see yourself more like a Californian than a Mexican?

A: Right. There you go.

Q: What do you expect from your future wife, does she have to be a virgin?

A: No, I don't think so, I think those kinds of girls are kinda hard to find.

Q: But you would prefer it?

A: Of course.

Q: What other qualities would you like her to have?

A: Put a head on her shoulders, to look out after me pretty good, be a pretty good cook.

Q: Should she be true?

A: Oh yeah, definitely.

Q: How about you?

A: I think I could for a while but, like they say, every man has a chick on the side. I would try to be true as long as I could, yeah.

Q: Do you know what "machismo" means?

A: No.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: Ah, so I could have my rights, do things my ways as long as I don't interfere with anybody elses. Like, if I wanted a house and, because of my color they wouldn't sell me that house. I was hoping maybe to get into law enforcement. Ever since I was a little kid I wanted to be a cop, you know.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know, I think they lead a pretty exciting life. And then, maybe I could get an office job in there, 'cause I'm pretty good at typing.

Q: What do you think should be done against violence in the cities?

A: Trying to enforce the laws the best you can.

Q: What has not been so good so far, since it still exists?

A: I don't know.

Q: Where would you like to live, in a big city, in the country?

A: I think in a small town. There's less violence and all that.

Q: What else do you enjoy in life?

A: Like, sports, I like waterskiing, yeah, sports in general.

Q: How would you like to raise your children?

A: Ah, I don't know. Just like, to raise them up to have respect for their elders, but then again make sure that they see that people respect them.

Q: As a father you would want to be respected?

A: Yes.

Q: You're the man in the house?

A: Yes.

Q: What about your religion, are you Catholic?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you a believer?

A: If you asking me if I go to church that often, no, I don't.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: I believe there is one.

Q: Do you believe in life after death?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you believe in a Last Judgement.

A: That's a toughie. I don't know.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints?

A: No.

Q: Do you pray at all?

A: No, I don't pray that often, but I find myself in a whole mess then.

Q: Do you believe the Devil exists?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Have you ever seen him, in human shape or animal shape?

A: No, but I did have this one weird experience. It was on New Year's one night. Nobody was home at my friend's house. And I was sitting down with his stereo and my friend got up and looked out the door and he goes, "Hey, Hernán, come here and look, the Devil is out here!" I go, "What?" "The Devil is out here!" I go, "You gotta be kiddin' me!" And he goes, "No, come here quick!" And I heard the gate rattling, you know, a person trying to get in. And I had just seen this lady about five minutes ago. And I was talking to my father's friend also, and he goes, "If you see her tell her I'm lookin' for her", and, boom! he split, he just took off. Well, I saw that lady trying to get up that curve and she was having some trouble getting up that curve. I looked at her but I didn't pay her too much mind. I jumped the fence, my friend was saying, "Quick, come over here, the Devil is here!" "You musta been kiddin'!" And I looked out that door and I saw this woman, she was about five foot, she had all white on, she had white clothes on, she was really light complected and I looked, and I felt chills running up and down my back. And she goes, "Let me in, let me in!" I go, "Oh, wow!" I ran to the kitchen, and we got some knives, you know, and we looked out, down the street, and I already told you I lived on a dead end, nobody was down the street. She just disappeared!

Q: How old were you?

A: I was about seventeen.

Q: Were you drunk?

A: No, no, sober, completely sober.

Q: Did you ever go to a "curandero"?

A: I don't know what that is.

Q: Do you believe in evil spirits?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have any experience with them?

A: No.

Q: Do you think there is something like the Evil Eye?

A: No.

Q: Do you believe in your dreams?

A: Well, like, the other night I had a dream that I had been at this place before. I don't know, it's weird. I don't know what it is.

Q: Do you have any experience with drugs?

A: Yes.

Q: What kinds of drugs?

A: Hash, I did LSD a couple of times but I had a bad trip.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was eighteen.

Q: What did you feel then?

A: Oh, I felt terrible, boy! I was just seeing a lot of things, hallucinating.

Q: What kind of things did you see there?

A: Like, it was really early. I just dropped the stuff, you know. I was having a great time with my friends. All of a sudden my parents called me home, "Hey, come on in." So I went home and I lay back in bed. I couldn't sleep, 'cause I just couldn't sleep with that speed in it, you know. So I closed my eyes, I wrapped my sheets around me, and all of a sudden I see this big grizzly bear, a big white grizzly bear, squeezing death out of me. And I got up and threw open the sheets, shook my head, and I closed my eyes and I just laid back. Like, and I could see four walls, four walls around me like a little hole just light coming out, and the walls are brown, black and purple, four walls. And I was looking up the hole and I see four heads popped up looking like I was inside my own grave, you know. All of a sudden somebody kicked up some dirt, I could just see the dirt coming down, sprinkling all over my face, and I jumped up again.

Q: How long did those visions last?

A: I don't know, it seemed like a long time. I don't know how long it was, thirty minutes, thirty seconds, I don't know.

Q: Do you feel that the Blacks have gotten too much support the last ten years?

A: Yeah. Yeah, like, before you never saw Black on TV, now they're all over the place. And have you seen the show "Chico and the Man"? It's played by the stereotypes of Mexicans, and they have a Hungarian Puerto Rican on there, and whoever the producers are, whoever has the say on that show, they didn't audition enough Mexicans. If they have a Mexican role, they should at least have somebody with Mexican blood in them, who knows what's going on, who watches, and stuff like that. And I believe that some Chicano leaders had some say in it, they fought it, but they didn't get no place with it. And I remember I was watching the guy, that actor. I got me mad.

Q: When did you have your first girl in bed?

A: It was just before I turned eighteen.

Q: Was she the instigator?

A: No, I did it.

Q: Which are the political leaders that you like: Carmichael, King, Guevara, Castro, J.F. Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", the "Brown Berets", the "Black Muslims", Chávez?
A: I think I'd go for Martin Luther King, for John F. Kennedy and César Chávez. The other ones are militants, aren't they?

8. Humberto G.L.
26 years
Chihuahua, Mexico (S)

Q: How large is this town J.?

A: Well, it's a small town, approximately twenty thousand inhabitants. The main work there is agriculture, let's say, some factories there of steel and metal, mainly. It is a region that is quite fertile for agriculture. Corn and wheat is grown, and also a lot of livestock.

Q: Did a lot of people from this region leave for the U.S.?

A: No, not many.

Q: Could you tell us something about your family?

A: Ah, there are four in the family. My older brother is married and works in a food company. Then comes me. Next is my brother who is a student. Then follows my brother who is also in school. And my dad works in a factory in the U.S. My ma is, well, she works in the house.

Q: In which town does your dad work?

A: My dad is in Tucson, Arizona. And my ma is in Mexico and takes care of the house.

Q: And all the children are with the mother or are they in Tucson?

A: Let's say my dad is just working in the U.S. The rest of us is in Mexico.

Q: Is there a person in your family who impressed you a lot, who has influenced you in some way?

A: Sure, my granddad. He told me all the details,of his life, how he started, how he was working in the U.S., how he spent some time as a "bracero", how he returned to his town which is Mantenyala and how, he worked in a textile factory, how he started to work on his own. He had a barber's shop. In addition to the barber's shop he was a small money lender.

Just think of that. He lent money with interest. He also had his small ranch, he sowed. So he was always very well organized, and up to date he still is together. He is seventy-five years old and yet is quite active, let's say. He's always doing something.

Q: What exactly did impress you?

A: Well. I was impressed by the way how he always loved life, by the way he explained to me how life is, how he confronted life, for example in his work, how he does his job, how he thought of getting organized, how he thought of planning for the future, let's say, in spite of the fact that he had almost no education, you could say. But he took quite a bit of interest in life. In his family he sent them to study, one is a lawyer, the other one is an engineer. These are my uncles, and I imagine that this must be for the whole life the part that he taught his boys to confront the system, like, let's say, to make something out of themselves. He taught them how people are and that you have to make plans for everything.

Q: Could you now tell us something about your schooling?

A: O.K., well then, I went through elementary, six grandiose years, a lot of diversion and no studying done. /Laugh/ Then I went to secondary school. That's three more years, and after that I went two more years till graduation ("bachillerato"). When I finished there, well, I got completely disoriented. I didn't know what I was going to study. I first went to work, then I worked in a factory - how do you say? - with metal sheets, hot metal sheets. After ten months I undertook the adventure of joining the Armed Forces of the United States.

Q: In which year was that?

A: It was, I was twenty-one years old, it was in '67.

Q: Could you tell us something about your dad, what he told about his experiences in the U.S. when he came home?
A: Well, my dad came home very regularly, you can say almost every month, and my ma also goes a lot over there to the U.S., especially to Tucson. So there is an exchange, when my dad doesn't go, ma comes and that's how it is. And my dad didn't have much education, he is completely a small town man, and he, well, he was interested in working in the U.S., and he was attracted a lot by the dollar, like any other guy from another country. And, sure, he explains to us the problems he's confronted with and that you have to do everything possible to solve them.
Q: Which experiences did he really have?
A: Well, the experience he had; a lot of problems with English and also problems in finding work, finding friends, finding persons with whom he could have friendly relationships, and also problems, well, in choosing a good job. What he was interested in was making a lot of money, see.
Q: Did he say that he was discriminated against from time to time?
A: Well, to be frank with you, he never told me then that he felt discriminated against, simply that he, let's say, has problems with English, and recently found work in a firm in which Spanish is spoken and that this was quite to his liking.
Q: What does "Chicano" mean to you?
A: Well, a Chicano is, well, the main idea that I have is he is a Mexican American person, born and raised and gone to school in the U.S. and of Mexican origin. His ma and dad and his family are of Mexican origin. Also another thing, what you find at the border, it seems that they have adopted this name "Chicano" for themselves.

Q: What are in your opinion the main differences between a Chicano and a Mexican?
A: Well, to be precise, you are saying a Mexican who comes from Mexico? Well, the difference is, for example, that the Mexican American or the Chicano, as he calls himself, he, let's say is, raised in the U.S., educated in the U.S., knows quite a bit of English, and the customs are, you can say, totally different from those of Mexico. For example, in the question of music, of dances. They always have a car, you see, they can have a car, an excellent job; they can buy a car, they have much more ways to get a car, clothes, luxury, more sports, a bit better organized. And, of course, you come from Mexico with completely different customs. And, like, when you go to a house of a friend and have to do all your best to be accepted in this house or else. In other words the customs that exist there, well, they have to try to adopt them also in order to be accepted, you see.
Q: What are the problems of the Chicanos within the white society in America as you see them?
A: Well, what I see, the main problem that they have is simply that up to now no, no Chicano has reached a high enough position to be able to help them. I'm saying to help them: give them a much wider orientation, so that they themselves can adapt themselves to a problem instead of stepping aside; simply understand it, solve it and move ahead, you see?
Q: You have told me what a Chicano gains in comparison with a Mexican - mainly in reference to material goods. What does he lose?
A: Well, the only thing that a Chicano gains is money, you can say, can't you? And they lose a lot in the field of communication, in the field of politics, in the field of art, in the field of music. Which in reality is the personality

of a person, which in reality is the esteem that we should have for one another, which is the respect for the right of the other, which is the way to behave in a place, which is having an idea of how to behave well.

Q: Do you think that there is also the lack of respect of a son for his father?

A: Well yes, that's what I was just explaining. Let's suppose, that a family emigrates from Mexico, see; the dad especially hasn't any kind of education, he simply comes to the U.S. out of interest for the dollar. So he limits himself to his job, brings all the dollars home that he can and sends his children to school. They learn at school by and by what they can, and let's say, they learn the language. As they get older, their dad, well most of the time he has difficulties with English and he has no idea how to try to communicate with his child, like to explain what studying is. Then, as the child is growing and learning, it is at the same time having the problem of communicating with its dad.

Q: Does your cultural and political mother country remain Mexico?

A: Well, sure, up to now.

Q: Are you going to change that?

A: Change it, what for? No, no way I'll change it, because up to now there is no other place. /Laugh/

Q: Do you know some of the Chicano leaders in the U.S., like Châvez, Tijerina?

A: The only one about whom I've read something in the newspapers and of whom I have an idea is César Châvez who, started to group Chicanos together, especially those who work in the field, to organize them, to see that the laws are respected for them, that they have their benefits from all the strikes that they had against those who plant the salads.

Tijerina is a name that is totally unknown to me.

Q: What are for you the differences between a North American family and a Mexican family like yours?

A: The difference. Well, look, the difference is in the customs over there, of Mexico. Let's take my family. It has very affectionate customs. For example, you have your neighbor, and you always have to communicate with the neighbor. You have to. It is a matter of pride for us to do a neighbor a favor, it is a matter of pride for us to be present at a meeting with a neighbor, to invite them for a cup of coffee, a roll, and you do this also with people that are not neighbors. Friendliness is a thing which has always grown between us, and it has remained. And the difference with an American family is, well, up to a certain point, the few families that I have known are also very friendly, see towards their neighbors, but as they see a stranger they turn automatically into great individualists. In the big American cities, especially New York, it's a place where it is somewhat difficult to have an idea how people can live in this state. They are completely apart from each other and there is no contact, you can say, there is no communication with the human being, with the other person who goes there. You can arrive there and ask for an address, if you ask a lamp post, you can get more of an answer from a post than from a person, see?

Q: What is your opinion about the Blacks?

A: I imagine that they have suffered, their pride has somewhat suffered. They know that their forefathers were total slaves and they have an idea how they were treated, and all. But up to now they have prospered, they have quite a number of personalities, including athletes, who have reached a rather high position, and now they have new plans, new laws which prohibit discrimination against them. And I imagine that they are right now helping them quite a bit to elevate them to a much higher position.

Q: Do you think that there are superior and inferior races?

A: Well, look. A visitor comes precisely to respect your law. This is the Mexican. In other words, the American has much more opportunities to defend his own system, his education; more opportunities to get ahead, more opportunities to have better jobs because, because the majority that have the main jobs are Americans. Automatically they have to choose an American for this kind of a job. I'm saying, I don't mind this, because if I put myself into this situation, that I'm in charge of a section of a factory, of course I would prefer, let's say, to hire Mexicans, because it is much easier for me to communicate with them. We have more customs in common, see?

Q: But do you agree with the idea that certain racial groups or classes within the U.S. and outside of it are exploited?

A: Well, the idea I have is that even they themselves are exploited. In other words, all races, all groups in the U.S. are exploited.

Q: By whom?

A: Well, I imagine by some leaders higher up, see?

Q: Would you mind the idea that your sister could get married to a blond, Protestant, very "gringo" American?

A: Well, look, in the first place I would respect, let's say, her taste. But if she asked me, then I would tell her in the first place that she is looking for something difficult, that he would adapt himself to us and we to him. That he actually should not be an American, that she should have an idea about the customs of Mexico, and one that she can be happy with; that is the most important thing. I would simply try to explain to her, to give her an idea of the decision she is going to make. It wouldn't be bad that she should try.

Q: What will the qualities be that you ask from your future wife?

A: Well, my girl, I chose her to be my fiancée because she is from a very, very friendly family that has always been together. The lady of the house is an excellent lady. Her idea of life is how they communicate with each other, also her brothers, how they behave toward each other, how they behave toward people. Her education is more or less like mine.

Q: Her family is important to you?

A: Well, when I look at a girl and I want something serious, I'm very interested in knowing what her family is like.

Q: Do you expect her to be a virgin?

A: Well, this may seem strange to you but yes, I hope that she is a virgin, yes. And I know that my girl, well, I can't tell you I'm sure, I think that 90 per cent she is a virgin, because she is a girl that I've known for a long time.

Q: Do you think that you have a certain responsibility for that girl if you leave her once she is not a virgin any more?

A: To give you a better idea, sure, with all the girls that I know, well, yes, it's a very natural attraction for every human being. You look at a girl, she attracts you sexually 90 per cent. Sure, you do everything possible to get her into bed, to have a good time, see? And this seems fine to me when I want to have fun, but it is not fine when I choose a girl whom I want to be my future wife. It seems right to me, because there, in the U.S., it is the custom, whereas in Mexico it is somewhat different. Well, I'm mainly referring to the town I'm from. And, I like my girl to be that way, that she shouldn't be some girl who would believe that it is something natural to have sexual relations with any individual.

Q: Do you distinguish in Mexico between two types of girls?

A: In Mexico there are also girls who, sure, believe in liberation, see, the liberty for a woman to choose whom she likes.

Q: What would you say if a girl told you, "You want me to be a virgin, you want me pure, I demand you that you are pure also"?

A: Well now, the girls in Mexico know how you are! Up to now you are not even asked, because she knows that you get married and that you at times go out with your friends and will do these things, and this is allowed from their side. Let's hope that they won't change that! [Laugh]

Q: What does the word "machismo" mean to you?

A: Well, the word "machismo" means, it's a person who though he has no idea how he is, isn't sure of his personality, of his physical strength, of his moral strength. So he wants to rid himself of this weakness in faking to be able to do something that he can't. For example, by fighting with somebody, by drinking too much, by faking to tell lies to his girl friend.

Q: How would you like to raise your children?

A: Well, you can say that I'm quite interested in trying to teach my future family everything that is possible, it can be said from the first year, see, and not to wait until they are five, six, seven, eight years old to teach them what our idea of life is, how they should do things. I would try to be open with them, to try to teach them as much as possible from the beginning of school.

Q: And what about you as a father? What do you expect from a child later on?

A: A child for me is like a sum of money, you have a sum of money, see. You are going to deposit money that you are going to get interest from. The difference is that the interest that you are going to make is personal, emotional interest, see? And this is the main thing, this pride which I would feel, that he could study, go out, work, confront life.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: Well, a good life is to try to obtain a job that offers an opportunity, that I have a certain liking for the job, choose a good town that has considerable advantages for you, communications to other towns, schools. To have a good house, and I always like to fix them inside, to lead an active life with the approval of my future wife. I don't like life in the U.S. very much because it's a highly pressured life, see? So for me, well, of course money interests me, it is something important to be able to eat, see? But I'm more interested in friendship, I'm interested in knowing some other persons, to be on good terms with them, as far as work is concerned, also to share it with friends who are working, to have parties from time to time, parties at home.

Q: If one day a Chicano should ask you, "What advice do you give me for my life as a Chicano in the U.S.?", what would you tell him?

A: Well, that I don't like the idea that they are getting organized help. In other words, to simply give a person money. Yes, the best way to help is simply to give them an idea how to clear the road for themselves, to confront life with more energy, to have an idea how to work better, how to protect their own interests; not simply count on friends or groups that they should come to help them. They should simply work on their own.

Q: Could you give a concrete example of the type of help that seems good to you?

A: Well, I have met several persons who are going to the U.S. and are in construction work and all that, and they complain that they aren't well paid,and this and that. They complain to other friends instead of trying to deal themselves with the boss; to ask him. The idea of the minimum wage they should make is that they also have rights like the proprietor of the place,. see? In other words, that they know how to protect themselves in order to obtain the best.

Q: Do you feel that the police should be stronger in the big cities?

A: I have not had many problems with the police. But the idea that I have is that they're pretty good.

Q: Do you believe that the Chicano can live with the two cultures?

A: Well, it would be quite good if they had an idea of what their heritage really is; like, the Spanish language, Spanish culture, the culture in Mexico, which would help them so much to identify themselves against the other people, see? Let's say that they should have a firm base. It's like a building, see. If it doesn't have cement it will crumble. That's how it is.

Q: If you had the power to change things: society, politics, the economical structure in the U.S., what would you change?

A: Well, I would see that each country deals with its own problems, jobs, economy, and all that, and that there should be no other country which interferes with the system of the other country. In other words, each family is a family and there is no authority to change their system. I don't know precisely what politics in the U.S. are like. There is no way for minority groups to reach a much higher position than what they already have, because the minority hasn't got much power to progress, see?

Q: What do you think of the Indians?

A: I imagine that they must have suffered like the Blacks. They were affected by the system of the U.S.; they took their lands, they left them completely broke you can say.

Q: Do you think the cultural part, also the physical aspect of Mexican Indians in the Mexican people is a good thing? Do you accept it as an enrichment?

A: Well, I look at the Mexican Indian like at any other person. Sure, some of them kept their old customs, but they have accepted the modern system very well that we have, this modern civilization. And I look at them with pride, because I have great interest to have an idea of how they are, what kind of work they do, what interests them. And you certainly can say that they are friends of mine.

Q: Do you have any Indian blood?

A: Well, imagine, I, personally would like to have Indian blood, but up to date the family tree doesn't say. But I imagine that as I am dark compared with my dad - he is completely white - I imagine that there is a drop of it. [Laugh]

Q: You don't mind it in the least?

A: Not in the least.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: Well, look. Ever since I was a little child I went a lot to church; I, yes, I believe in God.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints?

A: In the Saints, in their power I don't, but, yes, I believe in the Saints. I'm saying, I'm not a person who says "O.K., well, I have to tell this Saint that he should do this for me." I believe, sure, God exists, but it isn't a God that many people believe will do something for them. God can't do anything for anybody. It isn't a commercial affair. God is simply a person that you believe existes, but not to help each and everybody. We have to have the idea how to confront everything and not expect Him to help anybody.

Q: Do you believe the Catholic Church needs the power it has?

A: Well, as regards the Catholic religion, it's pretty good. As I look at it, there is no excuse to leave it, see? It's a belief that people have, that we have had already for many centuries, you can say. So it would be somewhat unjust to try to rub it cut and all this time of Christianity that believers can have. It's like telling, for example, to a person, "O.K., well, you're American, from now on you aren't American any more; you will be Chinese." This is impossible.

Q: Do you believe in evil spirits, in the power of "curanderos"?

A: I don't in the least believe in this. Well, "curanderos" exist, but that evil spirits exist, I don't believe. Look, the "curanderos" that I have met to see what they do, imagine, it is, yes, it's pretty good, because they know a lot what medicinal herbs are. And as you know, even for pills you need herbs. So they help quite a bit with this, the people who in the main don't have much education, he cures them, sure, because they give them herbs which correspond to minor illnesses, see, not the serious sicknesses.

Q: But many times the "curanderos" also conjure spirits, don't they?

A: Well, yes, there are some "curanderos" like that, but I'm referring to the people who believe in these "curanderos". They are simply people who don't have an idea of what the human mind is, see, what the power of the mind in the body is, the heart of each individual. In other words, they don't have sufficient confidence in themselves to solve a problem. They automatically have to depend on someone else and go to a "curandero".

Q: Were you ever insulted for being a Mexican?

A: Well actually, no. I didn't have an opportunity to be able to say that I was insulted, or maybe I didn't take it as an insult, perhaps because they knew that I had a serious problem with English. And many times they didn't understand me, many times they got mad, many times they got impatient, and I took it that maybe they were right, because I want to tell them something and they don't understand me. I don't have a knowledge of the language to express myself well. Well, it's natural that one gets impatient, isn't it? So I didn't take it as discrimination, but like something natural. If the Mexican American wants to join Americans and they don't accept him and leave him aside, well, they are right, because he should rather look for other people of his own customs and his own level of education to be friends with, see?

II. The Interviews

B. Puerto Ricans

1. Andrés A.D.
   27 years
   G., Puerto Rico (E)

Q: Could you tell us something about the A. family, especially people who you find interesting, people who shaped your life, who influenced you?
A: Well, our family, they came from both sides from France. The first part of the family, the A., went later on, at the end of the 19th century, to Puerto Rico. And the D. family went just during the French Revolution to Venezuela and then they went to Puerto Rico. And, really, I'm very proud of my family, of both sides; I think my character is just part from one family and part from the other. The A. family is a very, very well known family in my home town and they're the political leaders of the town. Everybody loves them, and that's something I'm very proud of.
Q: What was the profession of your grandparents and of your parents?
A: Well, my grandfather had a tobacco industry and my father is a pharmacist; my mother is a biology teacher.
Q: Which member of your family influenced you by his or her life or by telling you something that you found to be very interesting and true for yourself?
A: Well, I think all of my family on my father's side are in their point of view of life very much the same. One of them is sad looking and others are very cheerful, you know. And on the one side they are very Puritan people. They just are very cautious of anything that is wrong; for them it's

the worst thing that can happen. And on the other side, on my mother's, they all just live. So, you know, they enjoy life a lot; that's their main point. But the good thing about them is that they never, none of my family have heard of anybody telling that they have done something bad to other people. They just have been people that have been nice to everyone, and that's, I think, the most important characteristic on both sides of my family.

Q: You were mentioning the political leadership of your family in your town. How would you describe the political tendency of your family?

A: Well, certainly it has changed a lot. Our family is an old family, because all of them married late, so my father is the youngest one, and he is seventy years old. The last members of our group is very young now and now we are between thirty-five and forty years old. This is our main group now. There were two pharmacists in the family, you know. They acted very social-minded in town. So one thing got to the other, you know. My uncle was put into politics, because everybody was trying to put him in. He was the leader, because he was a very good leader to everybody; he didn't charge people in the pharmacy for some medics, and things like that, you know. At that time, in 1940 or something like that, they were very appreciative due to that, but certainly it has changed, because almost all the family was very much for the independence of Puerto Rico. That was from the twenties to the thirties, up to the forties, I would say.
I was not born at that time but I have talked about it with all of them, you know, and they really were for independence that time, because of the many problems that we had that we could not solve: the very big thing the Americans were doing then, just for the money, just taking money out of the island.

But afterwards, after the forties, they changed, all the family changed a little. They're just the same now, they're very socialized people, they just go for socialism a lot, but there was a party that started that time in the 1940's, and although they came late to that party, because they really didn't know what was going on in that party, they changed to it. That's the "Popular Democratic Party" of Puerto Rico. And they were leaders in our home town. Before that in the other party they were the leaders also. The president of the party, the "Liberal Party of Puerto Rico", usually, when he went to the town, he went to our family house and he stayed there. And he was the leader of the Puerto Rican Congress. By that time we didn't have a Puerto Rican governor, so he was the leader of the island at that time. He then had some trouble with Muñoz Marín and they divided the party into two: the "New Democratic Party" and the "Liberal Party". Most of my family stayed in the "Liberal Party" until 1944, when the oldest member of my father's family was a founder of the "Popular Democratic Party". But in 1944, the other elections that happened there, the family, all of them, saw the things that were happening. The social improvements of the island in four years were very great by that time due to the Muñoz Marín philosophy. And my grandfather, he died in 1946, but in 1944 he had arteriosclerosis. Almost the last words he said was that everybody changed to the "Popular Democratic Party". /Laugh/ Our family is a very, very united one. None of them do nothing without consulting the other members of the family. They really are very, very united.

Q: Did your father have the main role in the family or your mother, or were they equal in making decisions?

A: Well, I happen to have, I think, a very intelligent mother. She is very, very bright, and my father accepts that she is more intelligent than him. But my father, I haven't heard him talking bad about anybody, he's just a person. I would like to be like him. I'm not, but I would like to be like him. But really, my mother is the one that has a lot of thinking to do to make decisions, although the one that does the decisions is my father. That's the Latin way, you know. But really, Mother, she talks and she is a very reasonable person, so both of them, I think, have the same amount of force in the decisions that they make, and that's not very usual. At the time my mother studied, you know. This is very usual now in Puerto Rico, the woman and the man have almost the same strength in decision making in the family. But at the time they were married it was something very new. My mother was not the usual thing in the island; she had been in the States studying very early during the century, and, really, she is not the person to be taken as the Puerto Rican typical person, you know.

Q: Could you tell us something about your early contacts with another culture, especially Anglo-American culture?

A: Well, in Puerto Rico we had only one industry previous to 1940, it was sugar cane factories. And there is a very big one just near our town. Well, it shocked me a little, because that place, you know, it was completely different from the Puerto Rican culture. It was a group of American people living there, you know, they didn't mix; they have been there for thirty, forty years and none of them knew how to speak Spanish, because they have a very close group in there.

Q: Are they executives?

A: Yes, all of them are executives, all of them were from the Boston type of people, you know, at that time. You have to take things from where they come, you know. Some of them were rich guys from the States, they were good for nothing there, so they were sent by their families up to Puerto Rico to do their things, to get rid of them, mostly, you know. So they were executives in that place. They were at that time like the book, The Ugly American, you know, something like that. We didn't have problems with them, because, you know, they had to go to the Lion's Club and the Rotary Club in G., so we talked to them, but with their workers they were very, very hard. And our family, due to being political leaders, they had very big confrontations with them. Thank God it has changed a lot and they aren't like that now, because they are not so powerful, you know, because the industry in Puerto Rico has changed so much, so there is not so much of the cane cutters that were dependent on them. It was something very, very bad at that time, because, for example, in the cane field they picked people who worked only four or five months and after that there was what is called "tiempo muerto", "dead time", you know. These people had to go and buy everything in the American stores that were the stores of these guys from the executives. So they went in debt with the Americans; they had to come back and work for them every year around, you see, and that was something that certainly Muñoz Marin had to stop it.

Q: How was it in your school; was English obligatory or how did you learn English?

A: When the Americans went to Puerto Rico they put up an obligatory course; school was in English, because the professors were American. That went up to 1925 or '30, no, more. I think it was already in the forties and when Muñoz Marin took care of the governmentship, he changed it to Spanish. And afterwards, it had been just Spanish. All my life I studied in the Spanish system, you know, it was not the English.

Q: Where did you study?

A: Well, I started in a private school; it was all English. It was from the sugar cane factory. I started there but we had some problems, because I'm not Catholic. It was a Catholic school; our religion is very different from the ones that are going on in the island, my family, really, not mine. And I went to a public school, the public system, all my life. I just quit on first grade, because I was really having some trouble, and we were very deep in politics that year, so my father took me out of there and put me in the public school.

Q: And there the instruction was in Spanish?

A: All the instruction was in Spanish; we had only one course in English.

Q: Was this obligatory?

A: Well, in our school system all our classes are obligatory, you know. It was just a standard type of thing, you know. One of eight courses was English, so most of the Puerto Ricans don't learn too much English, nowadays, you know. /Laugh/

Q: Could you mention which religion your family has?

A: Well, my family by my paternal side, they are spiritualists. This was a religion that was started in France by a French philosopher Alain Kardec, and they believe in life after death. It's not like the voodoo in Haiti, or nothing like that. This is a very scientific thing, you know, and most of the people that go to our new center, you know, are very promiment, doctors.

Q: Do they believe that spirits come and visit?

A: Yeah, they do. They just, really, they go for that. I haven't; I don't know too much about it. Our new generation, the new A. generation, none of us goes for it, you know, we have our doubts. Now it's growing, every day, most of the young generation is. Everywhere they are going for that, you know. I was thinking a lot about that. I was raised in that, you know. I have my doubts, you know, but, really, I don't go too much for it. I think I have so many problems with living people, you know. Leave the dead alone, that's what I tell my parents all the time. But theirs is a very good philosophy, because it is a philosophy that makes them not care anything about material things. They're just, they just think everything is spiritual; they just believe in doing good to others and try to keep everybody as their friends, you know. Certain is that the philosophy is very good for me, but I really don't believe too much in the other part of Alain Kardec's philosophy.

Q: Do they believe that the spirits of the dead come and visit and that you can speak with them?

A: They do, they do, and they have seen spirits in our center. Some people have some kinds of spirits in them and they have cured a lot of people. Most of my family are just observers, there is only one, one brother of my father and the oldest sister that have some, what they call some visions, and extra-sensory perception and things like that. But in our town we are called the witch-town. G. is called the witch-town. Our town has a lot of spiritualists in it, and I think everybody in Puerto Rico fears spirits, you know. They really don't say they're spiritualists, because it was a social thing before, you know. Not in G., because my family is very prominent, everybody knows them. Before it was just in the lower classes that they used to do things like using waters to cure people and give some medication, herbs and things like that, really, that's not spiritualism. That's more like voodoo, you know, and my family doesn't go for that. They just have it like a scientific thing and that's the way they handle this thing.

Q: Now a question of a totally different order: what would your reaction be if your sister were to marry a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant American?

A: Well, on my mother's side, we are Protestants. We have a big mixture, you know, and really, Puerto Rico is a mixture in everything. We have a very big kind of mixture of cultures, of races, everything. Well, I don't have any sisters. My family is very united and my nephews are like my sisters. And I happen to have about four or five of them that are married to Americans. All of them studied in the States, so they met these guys in there and most of them are very, you know, you have to take them individually, and cope with them, you know. One of them was a very, you know, like an "ugly American", so they got divorced, you know. That was the first divorce in my family, and after that I have several others cousins of mine and nephews of mine that are married to Americans but they really are, most of them are doctors, lawyers and things like that, and they really are educated people. You can manage to work with people like that, you know. The real "ugly Americans" are the ones that just have their heritage and money to say they're something and that's the only thing they can use to be something, you know. But these guys are doctors and lawyers and they don't say, "I'm American", they just say, "I'm me". You have to accept them not due to being American or Spanish or something like that, they just are them.

Q: But would you on principle prefer that a Puerto Rican girl marries a Puerto Rican?

A: Well, I tell you, I believe a lot in federalism, that's the Muñoz Marín thought. The whole world should be united. I really believe that and really, I don't care too much if a cousin of mine, or a sister of mine, or a brother of mine marries some girl or boy from elsewhere. If he's the type of person that I don't like, well,we have good Puerto Ricans and bad Puerto Ricans, and there are good Americans and bad Americans. So I don't think too much if he is an American or not.

Q: What do you consider some fundamental character traits of Puerto Ricans?

A: Well, at the time we are living now, we are changing. And I would like that we continue like we were; we were very hospitable. You could go over there and stay with everybody and be very friendly to everybody, and you really enjoyed being there, because everybody was so nice. And we have it still very much in small towns, not too much in the cosmopolitan areas like San Juan or other big cities. G. used to be a very conservative town. Nowadays we are changing a lot and then when you get these different cultures going around, and mainly the American way of being, you don't like to invite people to your house. You don't like to have people staying there for three weeks, one month, two months, as it used to be before. We have changed a lot. Puerto Ricans, we are fun-loving, you know. We certainly go for parties and things like that, things that most of the three islands, Cuba, Santo Domingo like. We were almost the same, but still I think that Santo Domingo is the one that is taking the best of it. They are very sincere people, very friendly people, and I think we are losing this. I don't think it's very good to lose that. We are getting very suspicious of everybody, you know. We are really thinking first of the dollar and then if it was good or was bad.

Q: What made this change come about?

A: Well, I think the cultural impact of the American society in Puerto Rico, of course.

Q: Industrialization?

A: Industrialization, yeah. Before, we had a very united family. We are losing that and that's the main problem right now. Because we have drugs and everything.

Q: Do you think a bicultural island is possible and desirable?

A: Well, I don't think there is something like a bicultural thing, you know. We have a culture, that's only one culture.

The Puerto Rican culture is changing but it's our culture, you know. There are some people that are accepting it, others that do not accept it. There's people that want to get rid of it. If we could take the good things from every culture it would be very nice, you know, but maybe it's my way of thinking. But I think we have not learned the very good things that the Americans have. Because certainly the American culture also has good things, although they are very criticized by almost everybody. But they certainly have many good things. We Puerto Ricans have not learned from them.

Q: For example?

A: Well, I think the American people they have, they are very loyal in their work, they are loyal. They have a boss and they work for him. We Puerto Ricans are not loyal to our bosses. It's something, I don't know where we learn it, maybe it's the Spanish culture, you know, we don't want to work too much, you know. The Americans, really, if they go to work they go to work; Puerto Ricans go there and stay there and, you know. It's something very different but, certainly we haven't been learning too many good things about the Americans. Most of the things we have learned, we have changed to a consumption type of economy and that's very bad, because we all think in material things now. Maybe, I think, maybe we'll change back, maybe the new breed, the new generation, you know, with this hippie thing that is going on in the States. Maybe the Puerto Ricans take some of that also and start thinking more about the spiritual things. That real materialistic way of life, that for me has been the biggest impact from American culture upon ours.

Q: Would you say, "yes" without hesitation to U.S. industrialization of Puerto Rico?

A: Yes. We need it. There's no question about that, we need it. But not only American, we're now going to the Japanese; we will take anybody that goes over there with industries. Because we have a very big unemployment problem due to our very big population problem. We have nine hundred ninety-six, or something like this, persons per square mile. That is too much, so we have to create some industries in there. But there have been a lot of problems, you know. Industrialization has changed our way of life, and sometimes we have to think if industrialization is good enough to make everybody happy, having money, or bad enough making you so materialistic.

Q: What are your main criticisms of American politics and society?

A: Well really, I think that the American society and the American politics, that politics elsewhere is oriented as a selfish thing. If you have the power you try to be the chief of everything, you know. So I really think that's a natural thing, you know. I don't think it's the best thing to do; I think they should try to help others without just taking things in, but the way of things is not like that. The external politics of the States are run by Wall Street, not really by the U.S. government. But certainly, you know, they mean business every time they go some place, they mean business. They don't go to business to lose; they go to win, and they use everything they have in their hands to win. So, I think, that's the main foreign policy of the United States.

Q: How do you feel about Puerto Ricans in New York? Are they still Puerto Ricans to you even when the second generation hardly knows a Spanish word?

A: Well, I certainly think that the Puerto Ricans that are in New York, and that went from Puerto Rico are still Puerto Ricans. But the ones that are born there and that were all the time there in the States, for me they're Americans, because, really, I'm not French, I'm a Puerto Rican. I was born in Puerto Rico, I am very proud of being a Puerto Rican. But nowadays the new generation born in New York, they certainly have lots of problems. They certainly have things that are out of their hands but I think they should solve them. Their problems is the United States and they should not use the name of Puerto Rico to solve them. Their problems are their problems and we have enough problems in our island to solve by ourselves. My father went in 1928 to New York to work as a pharmacist during the depression and he didn't like New York, so he went back to Puerto Rico. He stayed in New York for five or six months. My mother studied in New York. She got her Master's Degree in 1930, and she went back to Puerto Rico and was a teacher there. She also was a Communist when she saw the things that were happening to Puerto Ricans in New York. But, you know, she was very socially minded and she still is. I have been to New York and I have not been in the very poor, poor, poor places but I have seen some of the Puerto Ricans that are in there, you know. And they, I don't think you should use the name of Puerto Rico, you know, to tell, "Hey, I'm not very well treated here!", you know, and this and that due to being a Puerto Rican. Because certainly they're not, they do certain things that, really, I don't like too much.

Q: For example?

A: Well, you go to a bus or something like that and, you know, they start pushing, they start doing things that they don't do in Puerto Rico, you know. And I think that the type of Puerto Ricans in New York is very different from a Puerto Rican of the island, you know. I think they're not Puerto Ricans; they're Americans of Puerto Rican descendence. With their problems in New York they have the same problems that anybody has from Poland that are white and everything; they go to the States and they have lots of problems also.

Q: But don't you think there is a racial problem very often connected with Puerto Ricans in New York?

A: Well, of course, of course I think it's something like that. We have the same problems in Puerto Rico, you know. There are social problems, there are racial problems; although we have a very big mixture in Puerto Rico. But you go to a bank and you don't see any negroes in the banks or places, working there, you know. You just see white Puerto Ricans working in the banks and other types of places. So certainly in New York the problem is much bigger. Because, if a Puerto Rican goes there he doesn't speak English. For me, that's the problem, you know. They go to another culture and they go in it and they cannot handle it. It's not the same thing for us to go to Santo Domingo or to South America. The future of the Puerto Ricans, I think, is not in the United States; it's in South America, but they don't understand it that way. It's easier to go from Puerto Rico to New York and have all the problems they have there than going to South America where their culture is almost the same, or it used to be almost the same.

Q: What does the "Grito de Lares" mean to you?

A: Well, for me, you know, really, it was the independence against Spain. We were very oppressed by the Spanish government. I was not born then, of course, and I don't think my family was in Puerto Rico at that time, at least my father's side. My mother's side was in there already. Certainly it was something that was needed that time, as other things that we have done with the American people also were needed at the time we did it. But it's something to me, nowadays they're giving it, the independent movement, gives it a very, very big significance and, really, I never go back in history. I just like to live while the problems we have now, how to solve them for the future: not going back to the problems which the Spaniards created for the Puerto Ricans. That was something that was solved by the Spanish-American war. Of course, it was not the best thing to happen, but the Americans took over in the island and the things that happened from there on are the response to the things we have with the Americans.

Q: What do you think of Muñoz Marin?

A: Well, I'm just almost a fanatic of Muñoz Marin and certainly my family goes a lot for him. We used not to be like that but I think he was, almost everybody except the "independentistas" agree, that Muñoz Marin is the biggest thing that happened to our island. Certainly he was what is called now a hippie. By that time he was a bohemian, something like that, in New York. And his father was the biggest leader we had in the States and in Puerto Rico. So he learned from his father and he fought with his father, because he was going for independence all the time, Muñoz Marin. But when his father died he went back to Puerto Rico and he started going from once place to the other, sleeping in "jamacas" (hammocks), sleeping on the floor in the very poor people's houses, and giving this social thoughts he had at that time. He tried to do the best he could and I think he did, I think he certainly did. I happened to talk to him about for the first time in my life while in Spain about five months ago and he is very depressed of the things he did, because, he tried to increase the income of everybody in the island when he took government. The net income was very, very, very low. Most of the people were working in the cane fields and there were only two kinds of people; the very rich and the very poor. So he started buying, or nationalizing, land from the American industries and give them to the workers so they could have their piece of land and work on it. But from there then he thought that agriculture was not the response to our necessities due to our big population problem. So his very bright group - he was not alone; he had a very, very good group around him; mainly Jaime Benítez, Teodoro Moscoso, Rafael Pico and others, you know, that were very intelligent guys, and they went for industrialization as the response to our population problem. Certainly it worked, but when I talked to him he said it worked too much, too quickly, and the people in the island were not prepared for that change. He is probably depressed due to it, I know, because he is the type of person, he just loves a very high standard of culture and a very high standard of good health. Those are his main two points in life. He is very depressed, because we have none of them, although we have the biggest life expectancy in the world. Maybe it's our climate, because I am sure it's not the medical care. I am sure of this because I know they are not the best things in the world. But our school system has decreased its quality too much. Muñoz Marín is very upset by it, and he is very upset by our materialistic life nowadays. So, now he's too old to change that, but he is still the God in Puerto Rico. Well, when he came back three years ago from Europe, we had about almost two million, eight hundred thousand people. The votes in the elections were one million more or less. When he came back there were almost 350,000 people waiting for him, you know, from all the island. It was something very, very great.

Q: What was Muñoz Marín's position as far as independence, or statehood, or the Associated Free State was concerned?

A: Well, Muñoz Marín believed in federalism. He would like to have, his type of thought, was to have Latin America united. That's still his type of thought. He has been in that all the time but the "independentistas" don't believe him. Certainly his friends in Latin America, Betancourt and

Pepe Tiguérez in Costa Rica, are supposed to be the most democratic governors and presidents in South America. They have a very selected group, and they were all the time fighting against Trujillo, against Batista, against Pérez Jiménez: all the dictators in South America. But Muñoz Marin was under the American flag and it was not very easy to take our piece of land and unite it to Venezuela and Costa Rica. He told me that "I'm not going to my father's birthday." We have a special date to commemorate the birth of Muñoz Marin's father and he goes every year there. The day before that he was in Spain and I talked to him. He told me, "The things I have to say, Puerto Rico is not prepared to hear them. So I'm not going there." He certainly had the same idea he had in 1940. But I think the way he handled our problems was the way to do it. He tried to increase our income. But now the industries are too strong for the government. That's another big problem we have.

Q: What do you think of the "independentistas"?

A: Well, the "independentistas" are a very, very small group in our island, because the biggest group of "independentistas" are in the "Popular Democratic Party". They are the majority in the island. Certainly, if we have to go up to statehood against "independencia" I think that "independencia" will win. Because most of the "Populares", the Popular Democrats, will prefer independence against statehood. But nowadays Muñoz Marin developed a new kind of government, you know, it's called "independencia" and statehood at the same time. We get the best things from statehood. We don't have our own type of money or anything like that. We don't have any customs of our own; we have to use the American fleet to take things to our island although our new governor just bought the ITT telephone company. He bought sea-land, sea-train and almost nationalized it, because he is using our "Popular Democratic Party" point of view. Maybe he will lose the next elections, because it has been a very big shock to the other parties in there. The "independentistas" are almost not talking too much nowadays, because he is going farther than they can ever think of. And he used to be my brother's roommate when they studied at Johns Hopkins and now he's slightly, he's "Popular Democratic Party", he's slightly "independencia", you know. That's what the statehood people said, but he will not admit it and nobody will make him admit that, and I don't know how he thinks now. Most propably his thoughts are still more liberal than statehood by certain means.

Q: What do you think of Albizu Campos?

A: Well, I think - I don't admire him certainly. Because I don't admire anybody that can send people to kill other Puerto Ricans and doesn't go by himself, you know. It's very easy to say, "Hey, go there and kill that guy", you know. I really don't like that too much. Certainly he didn't help the "nacionalistas" in that he sent other people. Because when he had his day in court he was a big coward in there. He didn't admit anything and that's one of the things that the "independentistas" really don't know too much about. They just have to go the newspapers and see what he said in court when he went there, you know.

Q: I'm going to change the subject now completely. Would you agree that the "machismo" attitude is very frequent in Puerto Rico and how do you explain it?

A: That's something we had from the Spanish heritage, something that's real, something we had, and we have changed also now. Nowadays the ladies in Puerto Rico have a lot of power. Girls study the same: medicine, law school, anything. They are just in all the fields, banks, in every business just like in the States. Certainly I don't like it too much; although I think that the girls have the same need to study and have their professional training and everything. I just think that the girl I marry should be raising my child and not working outside. Because I think that's a very big problem nowadays in Puerto Rico. When the mother was in the house all the time they really raised the kids, you know, they knew what was happening; they knew where the kid was and the family was very united. But nowadays the mother comes from work very tired, the father comes home very tired and they go to a restaurant and they never know where the kid is, you know. And that's something we have lost. Maybe it's not due to the women working but really, I don't think that women should work like that. I don't believe in "machismo" per se, you know, not that the man is the one that is in charge of everything, you know. My mother studied for her Master's Degree but she raised us. She raised us, because my father didn't let her work. He didn't want her to work even though she loved teaching. She raised us almost all the time, you know. I don't think that's bad. I think that's good, I think that's one of our problems nowadays. Because if you never have had that system, O.K. But if you change from one system to another you are not used to it. We are used to "machismo", we are used to it. So the ladies accept it and the man was very eager to continue like that, and when they change that's when conflicts come into your mind.

Q: Since when has that change been visible?

A: Really, since 1945 to '65. I think it changed with industrialization, of course. Most of the early factories that went to the island were ladies' jobs: doing dresses, clothing, "industria de la aguja," you know, needle work.

Q: Could you comment briefly on class differences in your home town?

A: Well, years before I had a big problem when I was about nine years old. I had a Negro guy that was with me all the time. We played baseball, we played basketball, we played everything together. He used to go to my house and have lunch and dinner: almost everything with me, and we were very, very good friends. So I took this Black fellow with me to the Lion's Club too, very, very innocently, to go to the swimming pool there. I was used to go there almost every day. So when I went up in with him, the guy in charge of the club told me he could not go into the swimming pool with me. It was a very big shock for me and then I talked to my parents and my uncle and everybody raised hell that night in the Lion's Club meeting. Nowadays it has changed. Now Black people can go into the Lion's Club and the Rotary Club but still there is some problem. All my time I was raised to be accepted everywhere. I am very proud of that. I can go to Rotary Club and Lion's Club and everybody pays the drinks for me. I enjoy it. But also I can go to the poorest bar or the poorest place in my home town. Everybody pays for me and I can get drunk in there and they take me home, you know. I leave my car in there and nobody will touch it. But there's other problems. For example; several guys that are white Puerto Ricans, they have studied. Their families were very poor before 1940 to 1945. They were car-drivers, they were taxi-drivers or something like that. And they sent their kids to the university and these kids now are doctors, are engineers, are lawyers, but they were from a poor family. So for them it is almost impossible still to go to a Rotary Club or the Lions's Club in my home town.

2. Rosarito P.
26 years
San Juan, Puerto Rico (E)

Q: When did you come to the U.S.?

A: In 1971 to come to the School of Journalism (University of Georgia, Athens).

Q: When you grew up in Puerto Rico did you learn English there in school?

A: In school we start learning English together with Spanish just about. And I guess everybody is supposed to speak English when they get out of high school, even though a lot of people don't.

Q: Did you go to a public or a private school?

A: I went to a private school run by Spanish nuns.

Q: Would you say that this was a school where upper and middle class students went?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they have the will to learn English or did they resent it?

A: I guess you find a resentment more in the lower classes than in the higher classes, because most of the people that belong to the middle or high middle class are closely related in some way or another with American business. So everybody sees the need to learn it. You know, your parents probably really make you see the importance of learning it.

Q: Would you say that English is spoken in Puerto Rico in the big urban centers, on the coast, and as you move inside it's lost?

A: Definitely. People in the mountains don't speak it. People in small towns on the coast don't speak it and even in San Juan - I mean it's not a language you just speak around for the fun of it. It's only if you need to because of your position or something of that sort. But people are generally reluctant to speak it.

Q: What would you say is part of the Puerto Rican identity? What makes you not American?

A: I guess our Spanish heritage, our religion, our social behavior, I really don't know.

Q: Could you be a little more precise there? This is an interesting point. What is different in a Puerto Rican's outlook on life compared to an American's? What are shocks, for example, for a Puerto Rican in the USA?

A: I guess that being in the South the biggest thing that shocks me are the racial prejudices. I'm not saying that we don't have them down there, but in a very different context. So I guess that was the first thing that shocked me.

Q: Let me just ask you there in which sense the Puerto Rican's outlook on "colored people" (since you have such a lot of different skin colors there) is different from the North American's?

A: O.K. It's not an issue you talk about all the time. Even in the upper classes, where the prejudice is more open. It's mainly centered in the fact whether my daughter is going to marry a Black or not. But as far as opportunities, it's really, you have more opportunities no matter what your color is, than I think you would have here. Even though things are supposed to be changing here. But I would still say that it's not an issue that you talk about all the time. You would only find it in certain social circles but in a different context, though. It's there, and some whites do belong to certain clubs where Blacks are not permitted, but it seems to me, like, that there are so many exceptions that, according to your money, and your contribution to society that you can't say it's the same way or that it's here at all. So I guess that was the main thing that shocked me when I came here.

Q: I have heard that in Puerto Rico there is no racism as such but that the social level of a person is important; it's less a matter of color and more one of your economic status.

A: Yeah, that's what I said a while ago. If you prove yourself in society and you attain a certain economical status you will be probably accepted in any circle. But the prejudice is there, though. I don't want to minimize that. It is there. I've known it in my family. It's very obvious.

Q: Would they have opposed a marriage to a Black?

A: Yes, definitely, my parents would have.

Q: To a mulatto also?

A: Yeah.

Q: To a bronze-colored person?

A: Hm, hm.

Q: He had to be white?

A: Yes, yes. As a matter of fact, to make this point clear, when I graduated from high school I wanted to go to the University of Puerto Rico, which is the public university, because I felt I wanted to get out of the little circle in which I had grown up. I will never forget the statement my father said, "Kid, don't you realize you'll be having a Negro sitting right beside you!" I said, "Daddy, that's exactly what I want! I want to meet all those people that I haven't been able to meet. You know there must be more to Puerto Ricans than all the girls I have met through school." You know, that shows you.

Q: Would you consider your father a representative of the upper class, the upper middle class, or how would you rank him?

A: He's conservative, high middle class or middle class, I don't know.

Q: Is he pro-American?

A: Very much so.

Q: Has he been to North America?

A: Yes. That's one thing I cannot understand. I told him a few times. He was in New York City during Depression time. He was prejudiced against; he had to wash dishes and do just about everything there is to do. And yet, the education he got as a kid in Puerto Rico was such to believe that Americans are some kind of small Gods that are so far superior. And when he was going to school back then, they almost didn't teach him Spanish. They gave more importance to English. They had to pledge allegiance to the flag in English, so I guess that upbringing makes him be that way. Even though, on the other hand, he loves typical "jivaro" music; he, when my sister married an American, he said, "You're marrying a foreigner!" You know. This kind of contradicted attitude which is very typical over there. About money they are Americans and about feeling, it's just a thing they cannot figure out themselves, you know. My father is in a constant contradiction with himself that he can't understand himself, you know.

Q: What about your mother, does she share that attitude?

A: Not at all! [Laugh] My upbringing was pretty hectic as far as politics are concerned. My mother's family was very much involved in the "independentista" movement and my grandfather was very proud of the Puerto Rican flag. My mother was raised in that atmosphere. So my mother and my father wouldn't discuss politics in front of us while we were little because it would always end in discussions you knoe. [Laugh]. So, no they don't, nobody in my mother's family is pro-American as far, I mean, as they're concerned, they would like to see Puerto Rico independent any minute.

Q: Were there later fierce discussions in the family or was that just agreed upon, "we don't agree on that issue, let's drop it"?

A: Between my mother and my father it is much, "Let's not talk about it", 'cause they're both too strong in their feelings and they don't want that to be a subject of discussions and fights in front of us. Plus they didn't want to influence us. They wanted my sister and me to make our own decisions, you know. Even though my father was very disappointed when both my sister and me went to college and got into a little bit more liberal ideas than he has. /Laugh/ But I discussed it, after I made up my mind, and my father got over the sadness of the little daughter that is not pro-American. Then I would feel free to discuss, and I would discuss with my mother's relatives and feel free to say what I felt.

Q: When you were a student were you active in university politics for a time?

A: Active in a broad sense of the word. I did not have my name in the list of people that belonged to a certain group. When there were issues that I believed in I would participate.

Q: For instance?

A: Marching against the Vietnam War. And marching against the ROTC. If there was a speaker that I didn't agree with, I would go over and protest. My graduation was a political demonstration. We all marched with Puerto Rican flags and a lot of people stood up and didn't accept the degrees and the honors they were given. And I participated in that.

Q: That was in '69?

A: Yes, this was in '69.

Q: And the reason was the Vietnam War?

A: Yes, and also internal university policies involved, you know, an administration that all the liberals didn't agree with. So it was all a combination of both politics, and then there had been some rioting and fighting and a girl had gotten killed by a policeman. So all these things built the students up for a very big demonstration at graduation. And I was all for it and participated on it. I never felt that I should put my name in things, 'cause I didn't agree totally with everything they did; like some groups. I don't believe in violence, 'cause I don't think it leads to anything but more violence. So some of these groups did get violence sometimes. But I also participated in political meetings. I would go to political meetings.

Q: Which party did you favor?

A: The "independentistas". It turned, when I first started getting interested in it, it was a more capitalistic party. And then it turned into more socialistic views and I'm still stuck with it, 'cause I like the leaders, even though they've let me down now. /Laugh/

Q: Why do you think the "independentistas" appeal to such a small percentage of Puerto Ricans?

A: It seems to me that it appeals more to college students or to people that got some education. I think the main reason is because there is a campaign of fear, and the opposing political parties that are so powerful just make the more ignorant people so afraid of anything that has to do with independence. They think it's a Communist party and that we're not going to have any liberties, we're gonna starve, we're gonna kill people, and always Fidel Castro seems to be too close, and people have him too much in mind. So I guess, that's why. And you are prejudiced against if you admitted, say that you are "independentista", 'cause people doubt your motives and people don't understand what your feelings are.

Q: Do you feel that Puerto Rico still has a colonial status today?

A: I do. But you don't tell that to the majority of the Puerto Ricans. It's a difficult thing to admit. They don't want to admit that we are; we got such a beautiful name, you know, "Puerto Rico, Estedo Libre Asociado". Maybe I should translate that: we're called Free and State and Associate, and it doesn't seem that that makes any sense to me! [Laugh] But the people, it is still hard to accept to be a colony in a world where colonies are outdated. Every country is getting their independence. So I would say we are, 'cause the way we're educated is very colonial, you know. We don't even learn our history, you know. If you want to know the history, and if you want to know the patriots, you have to go make an effort to find out about your background, 'cause you're not told about it in school. In high school I took a one-semester course in history and that was it in my eighteen years of schooling, including college and elementary and high school, which is ridiculous. So I think that that's right there a sign of colonization when you cannot learn and praise your own and from there then comes everything else, you know. Then we feel we're nothing and the mother country is everything, you know. That alone there shows that we're a colony. Plus the economical, the economical situation.

Q: Could you explain a little about the economical situation, the investments by Americans, etc.?

A: Well, I'm not any kind of authority to talk about that. I haven't taken that many economics courses. But what seems obvious to me, and what has been the biggest reason for demonstrations and protest is the fact that, O.K., we don't have the money to establish factories and industry of our own, we're totally dependent on American industry. This is going to sound strange. I don't think this is only America's fault, you know. The way I look at it, it's also our fault, 'cause we have accepted it this way. You know, every time you go to the voting ballots, Puerto Ricans accept the way we are, and want the way we are to continue. So I don't want to think Americans are that mean, it's just the situation is mean. So, O.K., Americans go to Puerto Rico and open a clothing factory, let's say, a shoe factory. And they get, I'm not sure what's the amount of years, but it's around ten years or so that they get tax exemption. They don't have to pay Puerto Rican taxes on their industry. So a lot of Americans open up factories over there with very little money, 'cause they don't have to pay taxes, plus, then they get cheaper labor than they would get in the United States. They make the money, then when the years of tax exemption are over, close the factory and come back. And the people just get unemployed, and then may be employed by another one that comes and opens up. And that's the cycle. So we don't ever get to build up capital of our own. As long as it's like that, we'll never be ready for independence.

Q: Today you don't see a basis for indepencence, economically or politically?

A: I think socially. The economics could change if the society would change, if we opened up our eyes to thinking more ourselves and educating the people. And if we got more of a nationalistic way of thinking. I think we could change the economy a little bit. But, it is such a complex problem, I don't even know where to pinpoint, where the evil lays now. It's just the way we let it happen for so many years.

Q: I have the feeling that the Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. are viewed by the islanders as being very distant. There doesn't seem to be a link between the islanders and emigrés to the mainland, especially with respect to second generation mainlanders. Why do you think that is?

A: I guess they got to live in such a different society, and if they're going to survive they have to sacrifice their background and they become a different nationality, just about. I myself don't know much about them. All I know is that most of them go over there thinking they're really going to improve their status and they find out otherwise, and some of them just save enough money and go back to Puerto Rico to the little mountain home. But that's about all I know. I've met some Nuyoricans and I do feel them to be totally different.

Q: Do you think they're more American than Puerto Ricans?

A: Yes, yes I would say so. I think they can relate more to the American Negro then they can relate to us in Puerto Rico. 'Cause the environment is different; the problems are different, and they got enough to handle than to keep up with back home, you know. I really don't know much about them. I know they have identity problems more than anything, they don't enjoy being put together in the same circumstances with the Harlem Negro. I know, I mean I have read, a lot about their problems but I don't have any personal feelings about it, 'cause I haven't been encountered with it.

Q: What about "machismo"? Do you think that the Puerto Rican male is chauvinistic?

A: It's changing a lot. It is really changing a lot. I would say that people under thirty years of age have changed a lot in that sence. I would say at this point that Puerto Rican men are the most liberated compared to South Americans. I'm comparing them to South American men and they're really chauvinistic, so I feel that Puerto Ricans have changed quite a bit on that.

Q: Was it accepted up to twenty years ago fairly much by society that a man was married and had a mistress?

A: I would say in my grandparents' and my eldest aunts' and uncles', like, last generation. It's not any more. Yes it was, it was during my grandparents'; I mean I've got aunts and uncles that were not born from my grandmother, you know. That's how close it came. But in this generation, people of forty and under, it's not any more, 'cause women had more education, because of the economical situation. Women have to go out and work, so men are beginning to respect them more. And women are not about just to take anything from the man because they need their economical support. Even that is changed. I guess it's part of Americanization also. /Laugh/

Q: Would you say that in the lower classes, in the poor "barrios", there is still a lot of -

A: Oh yes, yes, yes. I would think so. I really don't have any first hand information, but up in the mountains and in the slum areas, it goes on.

Q: What is particularly dear to you in Puerto Rican culture?

A: I guess, I don't know if it's a Puerto Rican thing or just the environment where I grew, or San Juan itself, but there is a warmth over there, human warmth, that I don't want to see lost. And even though we're supposed to be conservative and religious, I think we're much more open-minded than what I have seen here in Georgia. And people are just more open to other views. I feel that people respect each other in their sort of different way and I just really like my Spanish heritage. Even though I am very Americanized, I think the combination of both things makes something special out of us.

Q: What are some aspects of your Spanish heritage?

A: The religion, the religious feelings, the family unit. I really appreciate that. I believe I got a duty to my parents which is very Spanish, and I hope my children feel that they have a duty to me. And I think that's very important, the way families really stick together to each other. I don't know how to explain it - now we're getting to the emotional part. It's all emotional, I just don't know how to explain what it is that I miss from Puerto Rico. I miss the mountains and the ocean, all that is romantic and emotional, but it's there. I think that goes with the people even that go to New York City, you know.

Q: Do you think the U.S. is a racist society?

A: Oh yeah! But they're so racist, they're against everything and everybody! [Laugh] I'm not kidding you! I was talking to this guy from Chicago yesterday and I was explaining to him that I was a little bit like an underdog as far as looking for a job here in Georgia, and what were my chances being that I'm not an native English speaker and all that. And he said, "What are you talkin' about, I'm from Chicago and I know I'm gonna be prejudiced against here, too." So it just goes this way, from North to South, they're prejudiced against each other, the Indians are prejudiced against, people from Georgia are prejudiced against, you know, it is just on everything. In the same city, I talked to people in Athens, the people that are from the outskirts of the city are considered rednecks. And they're prejudiced against the city folks, and the city folks are prejudiced against by those that live in the mountains. [Laugh] You know.

Q: But isn't it most evident in color?

A: In color, of course, in color. Yes, the niggers are the niggers. They really have to prove themselves to make somebody look at them like another human being.

Q: What would you change in America, if you had the power?

A: Oh my God, what a question! That's too much of a difficult question. I don't really know what to say. I think maybe a lot of things come from the elitist society and the elitist government. And I would start working from there. I would start working from the high ranks of government down.

Q: Would you destroy the big industries, nationalize them?

A: I would, I believe in that. I believe in that, very much so.

Q: What about the evidently commercial aspects of America? To me it seems that America is built so much on selling, buying, selling, consuming and consuming. Do you think that is sound; do you think that is sane?

A: It is a madness at this point, the way we buy. I'm guilty of it too. And you're taken advantage of, the way we're geared is "the more you buy, the happier you are", and "the more money you have to buy material things the happier you're gonna be." And that's why the country is really not that happy. Of course, I mean, this is getting into philosophical terms, but buying things is not gonna make happiness for you, and it is very difficult to fulfill yourself in this society in other means besides money. I think the big corporations that you mentioned a while ago are guilty of all this, and the governments supports them. So that's why I said that I would start from the government down. Putting a stop to the way we're abused, we're just slaves of the buying and selling.

Q: Do you see any difference in the role of old people in Puerto Rico and in the United States?

A: Well, no, I wouldn't say any big difference. As a matter of fact, I think they're more respected here than down there. I don't know what the ratio is the U.S., but in Puerto Rico the amount of young people outnumbers the amount of old people in such a big way that they're discriminated against. I think there is a little feeling of that. I wouldn't say it's an issue, you know, but I think there is a little bit of that, because I found myself guilty of that.

Q: What are the aspects you admire in American life?

A: People are hard workers. Much more than at home, I got to admit that. /Laugh/ I think people, their motivations are the money for material things, but I think most people work as hard as they can. Much more than we do there. I like the way people take care of their bodies, the way people exercise. This isn't relevant but it's part of the society. In Puerto Rico we're just tired. We're too hot, and people don't exercise enough. We don't take care of our health as much as we should. I'm guilty of that myself. I admire that, the way people keep on living. Older people always play a role and that's a very good thing. I think it's gonna go like that now, my generation in Puerto is not gonna let themselves get old. I think they have a little bit more energy and I would think they would want to participate more.

Q: Which political leaders in North America do you find appealing?

A: Right now? None.

Q: Anybody in the past?

A: No.

Q: Who in Puerto Rico?

A: Well, I haven't been there ever since the new government took office with Hernández Colón. So I really don't know what's going on, what kind of a job he is doing. I know that he is going through bad times, you know. You know, I haven't heard too many great things about him. Before him it was Luis Ferré which is the one who sold us to American business, you know. And I didn't like him at all.

Q: What about Muñoz Marin?

A: Muñoz Marin - he's being built up like a little hero, so all you hear about him is the best. I guess, he put the country together in a time when it was needed. And he got a lot of benefits that we were entitled to and that we weren't getting before. I'm talking about the economical situation and the relationship with the United States and the moneys we get from them. So in that sense I think he did a good job and he was not corrupted. So I guess he's the only one that I could say at this point. I guess also, because he's being built up. He was the first elected governor, and he founded a party that is still so powerful. So, of course, he sold the country: he sold the island to the United States, you know. But as far as the local government, he was not bad, I would say.

Q: What about Albizu Campos?

A: Oh, I admire him! /Laugh/ I admire him, because my grandfather admired him and I admired my grandfather. So we're getting into all these personal things. /Laugh/

Q: That shouldn't be enough, though.

A: No, it is not enough. But you see, I don't know that much about him except that he belonged to this party and he was a very active protester, and that there was a revolution in Ponce in '52 or '50. And that's all I know. And I probably would have been in his group if I had lived in his time, just like my grandfather did.

Q: But he was advocating violence.

A: Yes, he sure was! He sure was. I don't know, I say I'm against violence, but I don't know at what point I would say violence is needed. So I cannot put myself back in '52. I was a little girl. I don't know what I would have thought had I been my age in '52. I probably would have gone for violence.

Q: Is there anything you would like to say about Puerto Rico or the States?

A: Well, you were talking about prejudice. Ah, I put a little personal feeling about it, being Puerto Rican. I'm not in New York City, which is an advantage. But I get a feeling I might be wrong, you see. I'm graduating now and I'm gonna look for a good job, I hope I can find a good job, but I feel you have to prove yourself. I would have to prove myself more than if I was a Continental. If I find a good job it would probably be also helped by the fact that I'm a minority. At this point, the way the law is, minorities have the same opportunities. Maybe I'll get a good job because I'm a minority. I don't know, you know.

Q: It is not a natural situation.

A: It is not. You feel awkward, you feel very awkward. I've been working with people here, the people I work with, most people don't have any college education and I work in the same level they do. Of course, I cannot put that as an example, because this is a college town and It's so full of prepared people, and too many students' wives are looking for jobs, you know. I cannot say this is the way all over the country, but I must admit I have felt awkward at times.

Q: Were you ever openly discriminated against?

A: No, not openly as a Puerto Rican but mainly as being not the same way other people are. I don't know if it is both together or one. But this is just a very particular thing. Just one job and one person that I'm thinking about. So I cannot pinpoint anything, really.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say?

A: I don't know what else to say. /Laugh/ I wish I knew more. I wish I was an expert in Puerto Rican economics, I wish I got myself more involved, but I was in fear. Like, I told you in the beginning with my parents, you know, the problems with my parents' political views, and I really didn't want to get into too much trouble. And, plus, then I was working for the Federal Government. I was working for the Federal Government and marching against the war! /Laugh/ I had to take it easy if I didn't want to lose my job. I was working with two phantastic men, you know, so I could not get as involved as I could have. And I regret that, but the circumstances, the way they were, I did what the best thing I could, I think.

3. Frank N.
21 years
Brooklyn, New York (E)

Q: How many sisters and brothers do you have?

A: I got two brothers and two sisters.

Q: Are they older than you are?

A: No, I'm the oldest.

Q: How young is the youngest child?

A: He's eight years old.

Q: Did your parents immigrate from Puerto Rico? Who came to the U.S.?

A: Well, my parents were born in Puerto Rico, both of them, and then they came to New York. And they've been living there ever since.

Q: How old was your father when he came?

A: He was eighteen years old.

Q: What do you think made him go to New York?

A: I really don't know, but it's probably because he got married with my mother and she wanted to live down here. So.

Q: Were they married in Puerto Rico before they moved or did he find his wife in New York?

A: No, they got married here in New York.

Q: Did you move around a lot in New York or did you stay mostly where you were?

A: We always stayed in Brooklyn, all the time.

Q: Were you living just with your family or were there aunts and uncles or other people living with you?

A: Well, at first, like, when my aunt came from Puerto Rico, my mother used to live in this apartment, right? Then my aunt used to live right next door. So when my aunt came from Puerto Rico we all got together, we all got together. We all lived in one place. You could get jobs and all that and then just moved to separate places.

Q: Do you feel that your family was united or did you have problems with your parents?

A: Well, I never had problems with them but, like, my mother had problems with my father.

Q: Did he look out for the other girls or what was the problem?

A: No, see, he always used to be on drugs right there. Most of the time, he spent most of his time in jail. He didn't have a job or anything. Whenever he was out he was a barber, he used to work in a barber's shop. 'Cause he gave me haircuts in my house. He had everything.

Q: Was he on hard drugs or was it just hash?

A: Shooting up.

Q: That's heroin, more or less.

A: Hm hm. That's what he died from, you know. He dies from overdose of heroine.

Q: When did he die?

A: When I was in the fifth grade. I was about ten or eleven.

Q: Did your mother remarry?

A: She did. She has a, the youngest brother I have is from my stepfather.

Q: Did he treat you well, your stepfather?

A: He was nice in the beginning and everything but I really don't like him.

Q: Why?

A: 'Cause I first, you know, like, when he was first seeing my mother and everything, he just treated us real nice. He used to come to our house and everything, and bring pizza, hot dogs, you know. You know, just try to get in good, comfortable. Then after things, you know, went by, the years, he started drinking. He used to drink before, but not as much. So then he developed a drinking problem, and all that.

He'd be yelling at my mother. He comes home on weekends late in the night. My mother being awake, you know, just waiting for him to come. 'Cause most of the time he used to come in drunken, hanging on the walls and everything. He was afraid that he'd get hurt. Sometimes he'd fall asleep right on the kitchen floor and she'd wake me up at two or three o'clock in the morning to help him to bed.

Q: Did he ever beat your mother or did he ever beat you?

A: No, he never beat her or anything, but he used to yell at her that she used to cry sometimes. Even for simplest things, like, if he couldn't find his shoes. He would ask her where his shoes are and she don't know, he started, you know.

Q: Does he work?

A: He works. See, the thing is, I think he was just trying to get rid of us, you know, me and my brother, 'cause we didn't really get along with him. He probably knew it, or I don't know. But we did not get along with him.

Q: Did you have fights with him?

A: I never argued or anything with him, but I just didn't like him at all, 'cause the way he treated my mother, you know. I will talk to him and everything, right, he married my mother and I had to pay respect to him and everything, have courtesy, but I really didn't like him.

Q: Do you know why your father took to drugs?

A: I really don't know. He had that from a early age, even before he married my mother, she told me.

Q: And she married him nevertheless?

A: She still married him, 'cause she liked him, and everything. But he wasn't on drugs that hard, you know. He started with simple things, just developed the habit.

Q: Did he go to jail because he robbed people for money?

A: He got arrested most of the time for like stealing things, try to sell them so he could buy the fix and all that. And when he wasn't in jail he was working in the barber shop. Sometimes he would go to jail just for things he didn't do. There was this one time he was in the barber shop with two other friends of his, right, and he was taking a haircut. And some were his friends, you know, just taking a haircut. And then when they stepped out of the barber shop, this lady hangs her head out the window, "Police, police, help, I'm bein' robbed! Those three men right over there!" And my father was in the barber shop. The thing was, there were three other men that robbed her. She didn't know who they were, right, so she just saw my father and these two other guys. Blamed it on them.

Q: And they got convicted for that?

A: They got convicted. They put them up against the wall, put a gun to his head, and everything. He even pissed in his pants.

Q: Did you feel close to your father despite his being on drugs?

A: I really do.

Q: You liked him?

A: I liked him, even though on drugs and everything, but, you know, he was my father.

Q: How was he when he was on drugs? Did you feel the difference when he was on drugs and when he was not on drugs?

A: Well, I always knew he was on drugs, 'cause my mother used to tell me, but I never seen him taking drugs or anything, or high on drugs, 'cause, like, whenever he used to shoot up in the house - which he did sometimes - it would be late in the night when everybody would be asleep. He'd go in the bathroom and shoot up. That's where we found him that morning. In the bathroom and, like, the cop said that he must have died you know, early in the night. And, like, he used to have the habit of leaving the door just a little bit open, for the bathroom. And my mother didn't knew he'd be in the bathroom, you know. She'd just go to the kitchen, come back and go to sleep. So in the morning when me and my brother were going to school, my brother got up to go to the bathroom, wash his mouth and everything, he say, he told me, "Hey, Frankie, look, Daddy is sleepin' on the floor in the bathroom!" So I went over there and looked. And he was, you know, all crushed down, and everything. I went and told my mother. I was young, I really didn't know nothing, you know. So I went and told my mother, she was sleeping, I told her what happened. She says, "Is he bleedin'?" I said, "I don't know." So she went to the bathroom, picked up his head. And he had a scar over here. Probably where his head fell and hurt himself with a tile. She started screaming and everything, went through the house crazy, like a chicken without a head. I started crying and all that. I still went to school that day, you know. She sent us to school so we wouldn't see.

Q: Was there any member in your family who influenced you a lot?

A: Well, really, my mother used to tell me a lot of things. Like, "Keep away from drugs, find yourself a job." Whenever I used to have my hair long, she used to say, "Take a haircut." I used to listen to her because, you know, she is very religious, right, she is a Jehovah's Witness. And I used to be a Jehovah Witness before, and I went to her church, and everything. Then I started sticking around with friends and all that. And then my brother started growing. And he grew a big Afro and he didn't want to cut it. Then I just stopped going over there. I grew one. I finished school. My brother dropped out of school. My stepfather got him a job. Then somebody had told my stepfather that my brother was smoking grass and all that. And my stepfather got him a job, you know, 'cause he didn't have none. He didn't go to school or anything. He didn't go to school one day. My stepfather asked him how come he didn't go. And my brother was a little bit high on liquor and all that. He started raising hell,and shit. They were arguing all day. Then he beat him up with a screwdriver, my brother. So then my brother had to leave home, stay at my aunt's house. And that made me even more mad, you know, 'cause I really didn't like him at first anyway. And when my sister went to my friend's house and, you know, crying and everything, telling me that my stepfather had beat up my brother, I went over there, running and everything. And the cops were bringing him downstairs, you know, he was bleeding in his head, still a little bit drunk, raising hell himself. So I asked him what happened and he said that my stepfather hit him for no reason. So I was going up there, you know. And my mother was on the staircase still crying and everything, "They'll take him away, that's my son!" And this and that. I'm going up the stairs, she stops me, because I took off my coat, you know. I wasn't going to do anything to him but I took off my coat anyway. I wanted to talk to my stepfather. My mother got the wrong idea. She started calling me back.

Q: Is your brother still living with your aunt?

A: He's supposed to be gone to the National Guard next month, I think. 'Cause he can't find a job easy.

Q: It's very tough I understand right now.

A: Not only that. See, my mother and I tell him that he's never gonna get a job if he don't cut his hair.

Q: He still has this big Afro?

A: When I left, he had a big one. 'Cause he tries to hold that, you know, cover that knot he got in his head, you know, cover that hole. So, he used to have a real big one when I left. Then my mother kept telling him to cut it. I wrote to him, sent him some money, he bought himself a jacket, got a haircut. And now he's gonna join the National Guard next month.

Q: You said you finished high school?

A: I finished high school in New York.

Q: How was your school experience? Did you like it, or did you hate school?

A: I like school, expecially carpentry shop. I like carpentry a lot. My father used to do that. He made little boxes for my mother to put jewelry and all that in jail. Handcrafted he used to make them. Cut it out himself and everything. So I really have gotten into it, you know. I like carpentry.

Q: Did you take any Spanish in school?

A: No, they didn't have no Spanish, French, and all that; they didn't have none of that. I was in a vocational school. So what they had was, you know, different kind of shops: like dress making for girls, upholstery, carpentry, machine shop for boys.

Q: Where did you pick up your Spanish then?

A: With my mother and some of her friends. She speaks fluently, right, she knows how to speak English, but with a Spanish accent, you know. But she comes from Puerto Rico, so there is a little bit of both in there, in her English, you know. But she understands very good, though. A lot of people come to her, you know, like, a lot of her neighbors that are Spanish, they, you know, they want her to do a favor, like, go to a Welfare office and all this and that to interpret for them. She understands pretty good.

Q: Do you live in a big house there, in a kind of tenement house?

A: Just a regular apartment with four rooms.

Q: You were saying you went to the Jehovah's Witnesses for some time. That was your mother's religion. Was your father religicus also?

A: No. He always was on drugs, he never bothered to go to church or anything.

Q: And your mother raised all her children in the Jehovah's Witnesses faith?

A: All of us. So we just, you know, slowly drifted away.

Q: How do you feel now about the Jehovah's?

A: I'm sorry I ever left it to tell you the truth. 'Cause, I don't know, like a lot of things they used to teach in their religion, like, they're true and everything. Like they say that in the last few days you will see storms, you know, houses falling and all this and that, people dying, inflation and all this and that, you know, and that's exactly what's happening today. So in a way I feel sorry that I left that religion.

Q: You still believe in God?

A: I do.

Q: And in life after death?

A: Well, that's what I was believing in. And I still believe in it.

Q: Do you feel that a Puerto Rican or a Nuyorican family is different from an Anglo family?

A: Well, there is really not too much difference, in the parents, though. But the children are different though. 'Cause, like, the parents still speak Spanish fluently, they don't understand too good English, you know. And, like, they can't get too many good jobs, you know, 'cause the jobs today, they want school work and all that. Most of them now, they gotta do what they really can find, so.

Q: Do you find that Nuyoricans have a harder time than whites in New York?

A: Well, the only thing different is the language. That's about it. But most of them get along pretty good, you know, finding jobs and all that. Either that or they live on Welfare.

Q: Do you personally identify as Puerto Rican or Nuyorican or American? If somebody asks you, "What are you?", what would you say?

A: Whenever they ask me what I am, I say I am a Nuyorican, 'cause my parents were born in Puerto Rico, right, but I was born and raised in New York, right? So I'm from New York, right? My parents were both from the island, so I'm no full-blooded Puerto Rican, right? 'Cause I speak, you know, English and Spanish. That's the difference.

Q: Did you ever go to the island?

A: The last time we went, it was in '72. I was there for two whole months. At my grandmother's house, my father's mother.

Q: How did she feel about her son?

A: Oh, she was really sad. 'Cause she had it hard. 'Cause my father has a brother in New York that's on drugs too, you know. And he was in a program, and all this and that. He's thirty-three now, no, he should be older than that. He should be about thirty-eight, something like that. 'Cause my father was thirty-three when he died. And he's on drugs too, you know, so she feels for him that he's gonna go away one of these days, you know. But she really felt sorry about my father. She was real glad to see me when I went to visit her, of course. I look like my father a lot.

Q: How did you feel in Puerto Rico?

A: I just couldn't get used to it. I was too used to New York.

Q: What was strange there for you?

A: See, I had been in New York so long that I usually talk in English, right, and I go over there and I can't associate with the young people. Like, they speak Spanish fluently and I can't.

Q: Did they let you feel it?

A: I wasn't really pushed aside but, like, I couldn't really talk to them and start a conversation and all that.

Q: But they weren't calling you names?

A: No. I just couldn't get used to it, 'cause I don't know. Probably the jobs, you know. The people that got good jobs over there is construction and all that. Poor people don't have too many good jobs.

Q: Do you find that the island is very poor still?

A: Well, I really can't say, 'cause I really don't know too much about it.

Q: You didn't travel there?

A: No. We lived in Puerto Rico for a year. And that was when I was only two years old.

Q: Where is your grandmother living?

A: In Ponce. My grandfather is still living too. He should be hitting a hundred pretty soon. That's on my father's side. My mother doesn't have them, both of them died when she was young.

Q: Did you ever get into trouble with the police?

A: No, not really, except once. Me and my friend and my brother, we were going to a school dance one night. So we said, "Let's go and pick up a bottle of wine," you know. And we went to a liquor store and it was Christmas Eve, before Christmas. And it was on a Friday. We were going to a liquor store, so we decided to cut through the projects, you know, instead of going around the whole block. And right over there in the small park that they have we saw this man lying down. So we were passing by, say, "Look at this guy, he got drunk!" And all this and that. So we looked close to see what was wrong with him, and he was stabbed in his chest. So we called the cops, you know. Then when they came, they just took our names down, our housing police, you know, for the projects, they just took our names down and said, "O.K., you can go." And they got called on the radio saying not to let us go, we went to the D.A. over there, detectors and all that.

So they took us to the housing authority police, right inside the projects and they asked us our names and address about twenty times. Then they took us to the precinct, did some paperwork, and this and that. We really thought we were getting into trouble, you know. I was scared like crazy. And then they said, "O.K., you can go." And so we left, you know. And, like, they was observing us, and all that. So when I was back around the block and everything, I was kinda a little bit scared, you know. And I never told my mother about it. But then, my friend, he goes to his school and, you know, close to the projects, Eastern district, and a friend of his told him, about three weeks ago, that they caught the guy that stabbed him. 'Cause he was trying to break into the storage room downstairs where they keep the bicycles and baby carriages and all that. And they took fingerprints off the knob when they caught him, and did that with the knife, and found out he did it. But I was really scared that time. I was scared.

Q: Otherwise you never had trouble with the police?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever take drugs yourself?

A: Well, I used to smoke grass, smoke grass and drink wine. Every weekend we used to do that. Then at night we used to go to parties, meet some girls.

Q: You enjoyed that?

A: Hm, it's all right.

Q: Talking about girls, when did you have your first girl?

A: I got one I got to go for in New York. She's from Puerto Rico. She doesn't know that much English either.

Q: When did you first have a girl at all?

A: I don't know. It could have been about fifteen, sixteen. I really didn't have intercourse with her. I just went out with her and all this and that, fooled around with her. I don't know. I kinda get scared, doing things like that. 'Cause, if you really don't like the girl and she winds up pregnant from you, you have to marry her or something. Especially if you don't like her that much, there's nothing you can do; you gotta marry her anyway. I'm supposed to take an engagement ring to my girl friend. I'm gonna take it but I won't give it to her till I found out what she's been up to, and all.

Q: Do you expect your future wife to be a virgin?

A: Well, I know it, since I know I'd be getting married with her. I know she is a virgin. I really can't prove it, but I hope she is, anyway.

Q: Would you marry a girl if she were not a virgin?

A: Well, I would, if she desired no kids from other guys or been divorced or something, I'd marry her.

Q: You wouldn't marry a divorcee?

A: No, not really.

Q: Did you feel discriminated against as a Puerto Rican in New York?

A: No, not really. I used to hang around with a lot of Blacks when I was back home. And, you know, and I learned to speak English even better than that, you know.

Q: And Blacks accept you?

A: They do.

Q: In the section where you were living in New York, were there fights between Blacks and Puerto Ricans?

A: There were fights against each other. Like, there would be a gang of Puerto Ricans and Blacks mixed together, and some whites, you know, then they would be fighting against some other guys, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, whites, all mixed together.

Q: What kind of gangs were they?

A: Just like the Black gangs they used to have every summer, you know. Have, like, a gang from Williamsburg and one from Bedford Stuyvesand, things like that. They always used to have things like that, especially in the summer.

Q: Why would they fight?

A: I don't know no reason at all, 'cause in the summer they'd be fighting and everything, cutting each other up, beating each other with chains and all that, and in the winter you don't even see one of them around, fighting or anything. I guess it's just some kind of hobby they got for the summer. You know, get some action going around the block or so. But I don't really see why they fight.

Q: Who do they bother? Do they bother just the other gang or do they bother people who live there also?

A: Where I used to live, where I live now anyway, this gang named "Spanish Kings", I knew this guy's father, his brothers and sisters. They used to live right around the block. And guys who were in the same gangs came from different places, you know, but they would be in that gang from around my neighborhood and they wouldn't bother anybody. Sometimes they would bother Jews just to have some fun and all that. They would bother the Jews, throw rocks at them, snow balls or whatever.

Q: They hate the Jews?

A: They just do it for fun. I don't know if they hate them or not. 'Cause Jews, like, sometimes in the summer, some guy might go up there and hit a Jew, and before you know a whole bunch of them come after the guy. 'Cause they have this togetherness, I don't know. The Jewish have this togetherness. You beat one of them up, he starts blowing his whistle and I don't know where they all come, and everything. And they beat you up if you don't run.

Q: Where you live, which group is most numerous?

A: Well, on the block where I live, only one block alone, you know. 'Cause, like, the back part, well, the whole block around, they knocked it down to make a school, right? So. like, the block that's facing the Avenue, where I live, Lee Avenue, that's the only block that stood up. Like, across the street, there's only three houses, 'cause there's a empty lot, a parking lot, and then a empty building lot, you know. They knocked the building before. That's the only Puerto Ricans that live there. The whole block is Puerto Rican. Then going up leaving my block across the street, there is a church that Spanish people go, right? And from that church on there's nothing b[illegible] Jews. And coming down towards the block where I live there's a factory with more Puerto Ricans with Blacks, whites, mixed together.

Q: Do you know what "machismo" means?

A: No, not really.

Q: Would you like it if your sister got married to a white, blond, blue-eyed, Protestant Anglo-Saxon?

A: Well, I don't really care as long as she marries the right guy. If she likes him, she can have him. It's really not up to me, you know. It's whatever she wants.

Q: You wouldn't expect her to stay within the Latin or Puerto Rican culture of life style?

A: It would be better if she did but if she, you know, like I said, it all depended on what she wanted. But I prefer she marry some Puerto Rican. Keep everybody in the family anyway.

Q: What does a good life mean to you: what do you want out of life?

A: Well, right now the only thing I expect from life is to marry my girl friend, have a good family. Just two kids, if it's possible.

Q: No more?

A: No more. Just try to have one of each. If I only get two girls I'm gonna keep trying for a boy. Try to get me a car, try to get me a good job.

Q: What kind of job are you thinking of?

A: I would like to, you know, find a job in carpentry, 'cause that pays good, it's a trade. If I can't I just try work, some kinda office or something down Wall Street. Have a good job. That way I can keep the family budget going pretty good.

Q: You don't want to get into drugs at all?

A: No, the only thing I do is smoke. I don't bother with hard drugs or anything.

Q: And you don't want to deal with drugs either.

A: No.

Q: Do you think America is a racist country?

A: No.

Q: You don't feel there is discrimination, say, against Blacks by whites?

A: Well, see, there is Puerto Ricans that get along with Blacks. There are Blacks that get along with whites, there are whites that get along with Puerto Ricans, you know. Each one gets along with everybody. Depending on the person, of course. Like, over there, in New York, there is a lot of Blacks you know, that live where most only Italian live, right? They won't like us Puerto Ricans or Blacks there in that neighborhood. Italians, you know. Like, some Blacks have their own neighborhood, they won't want no whites to live there, so Puerto Ricans would like to have their own neighborhoods. They don't want no Blacks or anything. It all depends you know, but most of them do get along pretty good.

Q: What do you think should be done in the big cities to make the streets more secure?

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A: The main thing is to fix all the pot holes they got out there. You know, they cause accidents.
Q: What about crime? Do you feel worried about crime in New York?
A: I don't know. But I really don't worry about it, maybe because it never ever happened to me, you know. I was mugged once when I came home from school with a friend of mine. But I didn't get beat up or anything, you know. He took my friend's money; I didn't have any. He took my friend's money, he left, you know. But he punched my friend in the face, you know, 'cause my friend didn't want to give him the money. Then he took out one of the razors that they open boxes with. Said he was gonna cut him if he didn't give him no money. My friend gave him a dollar and he booked. So, like, there is, you know, a lot of crime. You read it in the papers, you hear it in the news.
Q: What do you think should be done about it?
A: What I really think? There should be more cops in the police force or something. Or bring back that penalty of the electric chair. That would scare them off a little, you know. They were thinking about that idea. I don't know what ever happened to it. You know, bringing back that penalty.
Q: What do you think about Chicanos? I have heard that many Puerto Ricans or Nuyricans don't like Chicanos at all.
A: No.
Q: You don't either?
A: No.
Q: Could you explain that?
A: I really don't know but, you see, it's probably that language. They use Spanish differently. Like, they try to associate with us; they try to be with us some time, you know, hanging around with us and all that. And sometimes it creates a disturbance, you know. They really don't get along too much.

Q: Why, really? If you have a different accent, so what?

A: I really haven't run into no Chicanos that I know, but I had an argument with one back in Fort Polk, when I was over there. Something, like he said I took his beer or something which I really didn't, you know. And then he started talking some, you know, they way they speak. And I really didn't understand him, you know. I just left.

Q: I wonder if you could give any more reasons why these two groups don't like each other.

A: Well, I really, I really don't know if it's true or not, but, when a Spanish speaking person does something, you know, kill somebody, mug somebody or whatever, right away that's put in the newspaper that a Puerto Rican did it, you know. Just because he speaks Spanish. It could be really a Puerto Rican that did it, you know, but sometimes they're wrong and it's a Chicano or Mexican. Just because they speak Spanish they just, right away they say that Puerto Ricans did it. And, you know, that really puts us down. So that's partly why we don't get along with them.

Q: Do you feel that Blacks got too much support in the last ten or fifteen years?

A: No, I don't think so. I think it's pretty well averaged. 'Cause there's some Puerto Ricans that got good homes, good jobs, you know, they live pretty good and everything. And there are some that are poor, live on Welfare and all that. And you find the same way with Blacks too.

Q: Why do you think people are poor in New York? Is it their own fault?

A: Well, most of the ones that are poor, like those that haven't finished school, you know, can't get good jobs and all that.

Q: Do you blame them for being poor?

A: No, I don't blame them, 'cause we're poor ourself. I don't blame them.

Q: Do you know who the "Young Lords" were?

A: I heard about them back in New York.

Q: Do they still exist?

A: I haven't heard too much about them lately.

Q: What do you think about "Black Nationalism"? Have you heard that word?

A: I have heard it but I don't really understand the meaning of it.

Q: Or did you ever come across the "Black Muslims"?

A: No.

Q: Would you approve of a separate Black state or region in America?

A: No, I don't think so. I think everybody just, you know, should be together as, you know, one family.

Q: Would you join a protest march?

A: Depending on what the demonstration is about.

Q: What kind of issue would you join?

A: I really don't know.

Q: Well, suppose it was a march for better housing for Puerto Ricans.

A: Well, I would join.

Q: Would you join a violent demonstration, a riot?

A: No.

Q: By no means?

A: No.

Q: Regardless what the issue was.

A: Regardless. 'Cause, like, I'm the type of person that, it's not that I'm scared, but I like to keep out of trouble. I don't like to have trouble.

Q: Which neighborhood would you like to live in when you settle down? Do you want to live in New York?

A: It would depend, you know, if my girl friend would want to live in Puerto Rico, you know. I really will have to think about it and if, you know how women are. But if I would stay in New York, you know, I would rather stay in Brooklyn.
Q: In a Puerto Rican neighborhood?
A: It wouldn't matter, the neighborhood. Just as long as I would still be able to visit my mother, and all that. I don't want to live far and all that, you know.
Q: You wouldn't mind living in a white neighborhood?
A: No.
Q: Or in a Black one?
A: Neither in a Black - well, it depends on the neighborhood. 'Cause, like, whites, you know, the Italians, they have real nice neighborhoods. They're quiet at night and everything, not too many fights and all that. The streets are clean and all that. But, like, in neighborhoods where Puerto Ricans and Blacks and whites live, you know, together, the Black is kinda noisy at night, you know. Sometimes they have fights and all that. Streets dirty and all that.
Q: Do you believe in dreams?
A: No.
Q: Not at all?
A: No, not at all.
Q: Have you ever seen a "curandero"? Do you know what that means?
A: No.
Q: It's a person who believes in spirits and cures people.
A: My stepfather does. And that's what keeps my mother and him not together but keeps that argument going, you know. Their old fight, arguing and all that. 'Cause he likes to burn candles in the bathroom, has rosary beads and all that. Takes alcohol, buries his hands in it, bring him good luck

for numbers. He plays numbers a lot. And he thinks that brings him luck. And my mother tries to talk to him, you know.

Q: Did he ever win?

A: Oh, he hit the numbers a few times. But it takes him a while, you know. When he doesn't hit any, he comes pretty close, he gets pissed off. That's when he goes on and gets drunk and starts arguing with my mother and all that.

Q: Do you believe that the Devil exists?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you ever see him?

A: No.

Q: You didn't see his shape?

A: No. I only believe in the Devil because, like, you know, I've been in that religion ever since I was small, you know. I used to take Bible studies at my own house and all that. He used to teach me a lot. And, like, you know, they said, like, the Devil tempted Eve to eat out of the apple, and all that. And that's why we live in our times, these days like that, the way it is now.

Q: You don't think he exists in human shape?

A: No.

4. Aladino R.
21 years
The Bronx, New York / California (E)

Q: Did you stay in the Bronx or did your family move?

A: I lived in the Bronx till the summer of 1969. I was born and raised there and then I moved to California. I lived there for about four years. The town is about 48 miles from the city of Los Angeles.

Q: Is it a small town or a big town?

A: The population is 60,000, so it's not too small. It's a city town, really.

Q: Were your parents born in Puerto Rico or in the U.S.?

A: They were both born in Puerto Rico. My dad moved to the States when he was, I think, sixteen and he went to live with my aunt, his sister, because his parents died. They died when he was kinda young. And my mom came to New York, she was kinda young too. So they both lived in the Bronx.

Q: Do they still speak Spanish between them or have they forgotten it?

A: No, they still speak Spanish.

Q: Is it good, is it fluent?

A: Yeah, well, they know Spanish better than they do English.

Q: What kind of job did your father have?

A: He was working in the dye-making business. Those are, like, dyes are for making toys and pocketbooks and all kinds of things, you know. But recently he's been working in a place where they make measuring tapes, it's called "Distant", it's a corporation title. And my mom's working in a place in Queens in New York. Making cameras, you know, putting them together, assembling them. They're separated, by the way.

Q: How many children are in your family?

A: There is three. There is my sister, the oldest. She is twenty-two; she is married to a Puerto Rican. It is of no importance to me. And then I was the second oldest, I'm twenty at the time, and then there's my brother, he's eleven months younger and he's living in California.

Q: When your parents separated, with whom did you stay?

A: With my dad, along with my brother.

Q: Did you feel that there was any conflict in you between speaking Spanish and English in the Bronx?

A: No, not really, because, well, where I lived there was Puerto Ricans and Blacks, you know. We were living in the projects, it's this building of fourteen stories high, you know, and we lived there for about fourteen years, the same place, the same apartment.

Q: How were your relationships with the Blacks?

A: I got along with them, because there was nobody else there to get along with. You either had to get along with them or you'd get beat up all the time or whatever, you know.

Q: Did you feel that Blacks would look down on Puerto Ricans?

A: Both races are always competing with each other. Puerto Ricans want to get up there and the Blacks are really the ones that are moving faster than Puerto Ricans now, in New York at least. I don't know about any other place.

Q: So you think part of it is job competition, envy?

A: Yeah.

Q: You went to school there too?

A: I went to school till the seventh grade, I went to California and I finished my freshman year, and coming back to New York in 1971, and I stayed there nine months, and I completed my sophomore year in New York. Then I went back in the summer of '72 to California.

Q: So where were you at the end of your schooling?

A: In California. I dropped out of high school but I finished high school this last summer of 1974. I went to night school, a local high school in California.

Q: Do you know why you dropped out?
A: Yeah. I didn't like, I didn't like the rules. They're real strict in the schools in California. They have dress code rules. You have to have your parents sign for your hair, they don't want to have your hair long and your mustache, and one day I got an incident with it. A Mexican coach, he knew I was Puerto Rican and so I think he was picking on me, because he knew he was from New York and everything, and he took a hundred points off on my grade, and I only had a hundred points to start with. So I just dropped out. I didn't like the system over there. I was used to running wild and whatever in New York.
Q: Did you feel discriminated against in New York or in California just because you were Puerto Rican?
A: In California, because they always thought I was Mexican or Chicano. And I didn't know anything when I first got there.
Q: You didn't feel that in New York?
A: Yeah, sort of, but you know. I mean I got used to it. Well, you know, you ride in the subway and everything, you know, let's put it straight out, these white people, you know, they always look at you. Because, because we always lived in the Bronx and most of the white people were living in Queens. And I used to go to school in Queens, a private school, and people used to look at me, but they never said anything to me. It didn't really, I don't know, it might have affected me, it might have not, but I don't think it affected me, because if it would have, I wouldn't have married the girl I did, because she is white, you know. So I don't know.
Q: Did you have Anglo friends in New York?
A: Not really, I went to a white school, but, no, not where I lived at anyway.
Q: Who were your friends in New York?

A: Just Puerto Ricans and Blacks, many Puerto Ricans.

Q: Do you feel that you are different from a Puerto Rican coming from the island?

A: In a way, like, I've never been there.

Q: What strikes you as being different between an islander and you?

A: Well, they're, I don't know, they know more about, you know, Puerto Rican history and everything. And in New York they don't really teach you, you know. The only thing you learn is from your parents or your relatives, like the point that, you know, about Puerto Rican history and all this.

Q: When somebody asks you, "What you are, who are you?", what do you say?

A: I'm a Puerto Rican, a Puerto Rican born and raised in New York City. That's what it is.

Q: Does that make you an American?

A: [Pause] Yeah, by the way the system's run. I was born in the States, so I am American. So I consider myself Spanish-American, like, you know, a lot of Puerto Ricans that I know.

Q: Yes. but don't you want to establish a difference between what people consider you to be and what you feel you are?

A: Yeah, a Puerto Rican. Like I said, I've never been to Puerto Rico, so, you know, to me it's kinda, you know, kinda weird, because, like I said, I know New York City is what I know. So.

Q: What does Puerto Rico mean to you?

A: I don't know, it's kinda hard to explain.

Q: It's far away?

A: It's far away, that's about all I can say.

Q: Do you feel the desire to go there sometime and visit?

A: I've been wanting to go for a long time but it's complicated.

Q: What are to you the most urgent problems of Nuyoricans?

A: [Pause] I don't know. They're all trying to get, to make more money: put it that way. Jobs anyway. They're always trying to make money, buy this, buy that, whatever. It's just like a rat race, because my mom, you know, my mom and all the people I know, relatives, Puerto Ricans, they're just worried right now about making money, you know. Just trying to get to another day. I guess, that's mainly what I see.

Q: Did you criticize this?

A: Yeah, I wouldn't live like that, that's what I told, like I told my sister, she lives in New York City too. She was going to California but she came back to New York. She couldn't get used to California. But it's like a rat race to me. That's one of the reasons why I was, you know, glad to get out of New York.

Q: What does a good life mean to you then?

A: [Pause] I don't know. I enjoy differences in climates. I like the climate in California, the sun. I like to be out, in the outside, I'm sick and tired of being inside the city, you know, living in projects,and stuff. And I like living in a small house, private, you know. I enjoy a family, that's one of the reasons why I got married. I had a choice either to forget [illegible] whole thing, you know, or get married. I really enjoy, you know, family life.

Q: What about work?

A: Work. That's one question I don't know yet.

Q: Would you take any kind of job?

A: No, not any kind of job. I have experience in a couple of jobs. Probably just light assembly work or something like that.

Q: And what kind of studying do you want to do?

A: I was interested in an outdoors work, like geologist, but it takes a lot of study, so. I was thinking of law enforcement but I don't really care too much for it.

Q: What bugged you most in New York? And then was there anything that you liked about New York?

A: What I liked about it is, I don't know, it's just a great experience, you know. But I hate being crowded, you know. Just being in there with a lot of people all over the place.

Q: Was your apartment small?

A: Yes, two bedrooms for three children and, you know, parents.

Q: Was the street or the block fairly safe where you lived?

A: No. No.

Q: Could you explain the kind of dangers that children or youngsters run there?

A: Well, you know, I guess everywhere where you go, but, you know, you can get hit by a car. I don't know, children are kinda safer than adults, really, in a way, because not too many people bother children, only, like, when they start getting a little older, they start getting in trouble.

Q: What about adults?

A: Well, there's all kinds of problems they can get into like gangs, or drugs, getting mugged if they work, you know.

Q: Do you think there is one group mainly responsible for mugging and robbing? Could you say that it is mostly Blacks, or that it is mostly Puerto Ricans?

A: Both.

Q: Why do people do it?

A: Well, they need the money for different things. A lot of people in New York don't work. They're on unemployment or Welfare, and there's a lotta guys who don't wanna work. So they need money to eat or whatever they want to do, drugs or whatever, partying, buy clothes.

Q: Is it true that many Puerto Rican adolescents at age eighteen or sixteen, form gangs in order to defent their block against another gang?

A: I don't think it's to defend a block, because I knew gangs when I went back to New York in '71. I met a lot of guys from gangs and it's not to defend blocks from any other block. It's just, a lot of guys have dropped out of school and they don't have anything else to do, I guess. They lived in a basement, there was about thirty, thirty-five of them. The rest of them either lived at home, skip school sometime, go into the club. They would fight against many, against Negro gangs, 'cause the Puerto Rican gangs always had a couple Negroes in them and the Black gangs is Negroes, no Puerto Ricans. And sometimes against a white gang. They lived about ten miles away.

Q: Do you think that there are superior races and inferior races?

A: No, not really. It's just a person, I guess. I don't know, you know, I been, like, copping out of the, you know, the whole picture. I just been sitting back and watching what's going on and I just been doing, like they say, "my own thing", you know.

Q: You don't feel that the Black race is inferior to the white race?

A: No, no.

Q: What kind of discrimination did you feel in California?

A: Against Mexicans, not so much against me after people knew who I was, but they'd still be, you know, people that didn't know me. They'd call me a wetback or a Chicano, you know. A wetback is just slang for people that come across the border illegally or, you know, it's a way of getting at you and get you mad, or whatever.

Q: Whom did you associate with in California: Mexicans or Anglos?

A: Mostly Anglos, I couldn't get along with Chicanos.

Q: Why? I heard very often that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans don't get along. Why?
A: The language: different accent, different words. It's mainly the way they act. Chicanos stick by themselves, they don't stick with anybody else, I don't know. They seem to be more together than a lot of Puerto Ricans, but to me it seems for the worse, you know. They're more violent really than Puerto Ricans in New York, 'cause in California it's easy to get fire-arms and you see a lot more killing than you, you know, you would even in a city like New York.
Q: What other differences are there between Chicanos and Puerto Ricans?
A: I mean the life style. For example, the way they dress. Puerto Ricans dress, many, most of them in New York, dress like the Blacks, and Mexicans in California, they have a different way of dressing. They wear these white T-shirts and Levis like the Anglos, but instead of just leaving them like that they starch their clothes, you know. It's different. And different ways they wear their hair. They do it straight down, like the Indian way. A lot of Chicanos say that they're Indian, you know, background or race: their forefathers are Indians and they kinda try to live it. Puerto Ricans too, they wear headbands. Mexicans wear them in a different way. Yeah.
Q: Why would Chicanos exclude Puerto Ricans?
A: You'd have to act like they do and dress like they do.
Q: Otherwise you're not accepted?
A: No. They think you, I don't know. It's kinda weird, because you make friends faster with Anglos. At least I did, I made friends faster with whites than I did with the Chicanos. And I hang around with the Anglos, yeah.
Q: How are, according to you, the differences between an Anglo family and a Nuyorican family? Are there any differences?

A: Yes, a lot. This is a city life. Mostly the Anglo families I knew in California were, you know, in suburbs, in other other words, one private house and everything. In New York hardly anybody can own, you know, a house by themselves. It's just the whole, you know, whole situation in the city, and living in the suburbs where I lived there. It's just, you know, the customs.

Q: An example?

A: Well, Anglos seem to me more afraid to talk out problems than a lot of Puerto Ricans.

Q: What about the relationship between the children and their parents?

A: There's quite a bit of difference. For example, I don't know, most Puerto Rican families, you know, whatever their son and daughter is doing, you know, but they kinda like, they do talk against it but they're not so critical like a lot of Anglos that I knew, their parents that I knew. Their parents were real critical, they were always on their backs, about what they did. And most Puerto Ricans, they do care but they kinda like, they shine it on or they do try to help, but they see that it's hopeless, so they let them go, I guess.

Q: Any other differences?

A: Like I said, things are more open in a Puerto Rican family than they are in an Anglo family, because like, morals, like, you go out with a girl and, you know, what's going on most of the time, and in an Anglo family everybody is mad as hell when they find out about it, you know. And, you know, and, like, I had a lot of friends in New York and they went out with girls and did certain things, you know, and nobody ever said anything about it, you know.

Q: You mean somebody got a girl pregnant?

A: Yeah, stuff like that. Yeah, it was just admitted.

Q: How did the girl's parents react? Did they admit it too?

A: They would be mad, but in New York, I don't know, a lot more people believe in abortion than they do in California where I was living at.

Q: Even poor people do?

A: Yeah, even poor people, yeah.

Q: Do you know any of the Puerto Rican statesmen like Muñoz Marin or Albizu Campos or is it too far away from you? Or a party? That doesn't mean much to you?

A: No, that doesn't mean much to me. Only I heard the name of Muñoz Marin once, a couple of times. He is, I guess in charge of Puerto Rico or something like that. Some people, some of our relatives, said they didn't like him, some said they did, so that's about all I know about it.

Q: Whom did you vote for?

A: I've never voted. I'm one of those people who just stay back and watch.

Q: Why? You didn't trust them?

A: I don't know, I've never had a lot of interest in government until lately. I'm just watching, see what's going on. But I've never voted before.

Q: Have you heard about the "Young Lords"?

A: I heard about them but, you know, to me it's just like any other gang, really.

Q: You feel that they were just violent and didn't accomplish anything?

A: I can't really answer because from what I've seen there was, they, in other words, they had a thing a little better than most of the gangs. They had more organized things they used to do. Like, they used to go around and paint their names on the side of buildings and stuff, but they wouldn't paint them like the grafitti type; more organized and more faithful than most Puerto Rican gangs anyway. Yeah.

Q: But you would never join them.

A: No, no.

Q: What is your opinion of the New York Jews?

A: I don't know. Most of them own most of the city anyway, but I don't know.

Q: Do you like them for it or do you hate them for it?

A: I don't know. I just, like I said, I don't really care too much for New York any more. Yes, my relatives are there, I just -.

Q: But when you were in New York what was the opinion in your family, for example, about Jews?

A: I don't know. My dad never said nothing. His boss was Jewish and everything, but he never said too much about it, I guess. I guess as long as he got paid, that's all he was worried about. Yeah.

Q: What would your reaction be if your sister married a white, blond, Anglo-Saxon American?

A: I wouldn't mind it, because I myself married an Anglo-American. But she's already married to a Puerto Rican, you know, so.

Q: Are you Catholic?

A: No, Protestant.

Q: Which denomination?

A: Right now I'm just, I can't really say, but I was brought up in Seventh Day Adventist religion, yeah.

Q: Are you a believer?

A: No, not the way I should be, not really.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you believe in life after death?

A: I've been taught that way, so I really do, you know. It's just in my mind now.

Q: What qualities do you expect from a good wife? Does she have to be a virgin?

A: No, not really. Mine was, but, you know, that's beside the point most of the time.

Q: You wouldn't mind if she were not a virgin?

A: No, but -

Q: But you would prefer it.

A: Yeah, I would prefer it. It all depends on what kind of a reputation she has. Yeah, mainly.

Q: What other qualities do you expect?

A: Let me see. We can talk our problems out, mainly, that's one of the problems I kinda had at first with my wife or when I was going with her as boy friend-girl friend-relationship. As long as she does what I asked her at home, you know, I don't know.

Q: Do you expect her to stay at home or do you accept that she works also?

A: At the moment I prefer she stayed home, 'cause, like, in my situation, I'm gonna have two children, anyway I already have one. And it's kinda hard for her to be out working, anyway.

Q: But you're not against a woman working on principle?

A: I don't really like the idea, but it's, 'cause I like my wife so I'd be against having children raised by somebody else, baby sitter or whatever.

Q: What does the word "machismo" mean to you?

A: I've heard it before, somebody told me it meant "pride", "Puerto Rican pride", or something.

Q: If you had the power to change things in America, what would you change?

A: I don't know, probably government, 'cause that's what everybody says. I'm not really much into government, you know.

Q: Well, what are aspects of American life that you don't think are good?

A: Overpopulation and cities and stuff like that.

Q: Cities are too big?

A: Too populated. The way it's, you know, certain qualities, you have to have a job. Like, to have a real good job you have to have a skill. Not really have to be a high school graduate, but have a skill and have experience of at least two years. Most of the jobs that I've seen in the paper ads when I was in California. And I worked in different jobs and they preferred people who knew what they were doing.

Q: You would change that?

A: Yes.

Q: What about security in the cities? Would you like to have safer towns and streets?

A: Yeah, but it would really never be possible, because the way people are. City people are, they have more pressures than people in the suburbs, and stuff like that.

Q: Would you prefer to live in a small town?

A: Right now, at the moment, yes.

Q: Do you feel that the police has to be stronger in the big cities?

A: Yes, due to the problems they run into every day or whatever.

Q: Do you feel that a criminal is responsible for his acts?

A: /Pause/ Let me see. Yeah, most of them I think is.

Q: What about the rest?

A: It all depends, it all depends what drove them into doing whatever it was.

Q: Whose fault could it also be?

A: I guess, the system, the government, whatever. If he was rejected from a job or something, then he might have to go out and do something that's not in the law.

Q: Do you think there is racism in America?

A: Yes.

Q: What are typical attitudes of racism?

A: Like, I was with a couple of guys in a room the other day and they said, "I don't like Blacks, but I don't care as long as they don't get in my way", or something like that. I don't pay too much attention to it any more unless it gets into a fight or something like that, you know.

Q: You don't like fights, do you?

A: No.

Q: Are there any values or anything that would make you fight?

A: No. I guess just to protect myself or my wife or whatever you know.

Q: How good is your Spanish today?

A: It's good enough to understand, to read.

Q: Can you read books?

A: Yeah, I can read, but not as fast as most Puerto Ricans from the island, I guess, can.

Q: Your English is better than your Spanish?

A: Yeah, my English is better than my Spanish. I've been taught in American schools, so everything I learned was in English since I was born.

Q: Did you ever have Spanish instruction in the States?

A: No, no.

Q: Do you believe in evil spirits?

A: No, not really. I used to think it's people, people who make your problems: cause whatever is going on.

Q: Do you believe there are any devils in human shape doing mischief?

A: No, not really. No.

5. Carlos M.D.
   22 years
   Caparraterra, Puerto Rico (S)

Q: Where is Caparraterra?

A: In San Juan, in the Río Piedras district, San Juan, Puerto Rico. I was born in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. I lived all the time in San Juan. My parents are from Yabucoa.

Q: Is Yabucoa a town?

A: No, it is a village, a small village on the southeastern part of Puerto Rico.

Q: What job did your father have?

A: Well, he worked in the field. This was in 1952 but he reenlisted in the Army, you see, and he had the bad luck to die in the Army.

Q: Where?

A: In Korea, the war in Korea, the Second World War. So at that time, well, ma moved to Caparraterra. Since that time we have been living in San Juan.

Q: And your mother never remarried?

A: No, she never married.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I have two sisters. One actually was born with me, so we are twins. The other is older than I am. There are three children in the family.

Q: And you have always lived in Puerto Rico or have you also lived in the U.S.?

A: Well, I have always lived in Puerto Rico, you see, but I was ten months outside Puerto Rico, in the U.S., with my uncle, studying photography for about ten months. Afterwards I returned to Puerto Rico to work in this field.

Q: In which year was that?

A: This was in '73, '72 to '73.

Q: Did you go to school in San Juan itself?

A: Elementary and secondary in Caparraterra, Río Piedras. I was always at school in Río Piedras.

Q: What was the last grade you finished?

A: Ninth grade, I was going to night school.

Q: At what age did you leave school?

A: Around sixteen, seventeen years I left school.

Q: Was the teaching there done in English or in Spanish?

A: It was in Spanish. But they give classes in English from the first grade to the university. We always have diplomas in English. This presumes that we have to learn English. Well, when I was at school learning English, well, I felt that I wasn't interested in English, because I never talked it with anybody except the teacher; it didn't interest me. But now, lately, since I became adult, well, I feel a little bitter that I did not learn it. Because now I have problems. You are expected to talk English and I don't know it very well.

Q: Was English an elective subject in school or not?

A: No, it's obligatory. English classes are obligatory. It doesn't matter if you like or not; you have to take it. At school I was at a Catholic private school. And I like the Catholic school because you learn better, you see. Then after I left they changed me to a public school and I had problems, you see. I would have liked to stay at the Catholic school all the time. I always liked the Catholic school but they transferred me and, you see, I lost myself.

Q: Are your parents' families large? Were there uncles and aunts around you who influenced you?

A: It is a problem for me, because as my father died in Korea, you see, and I never had anyone, no father, no uncle who lived close - all my uncles are in the U.S. from the age they could leave their house. All the family on my father's side, all went to the U.S. to work. My ma, the family of my ma, well, is very small, you understand. I don't know, for me, I myself have been my father. My ma had to be father and mother for me, because I never had a father nor an uncle who would tell me, "Look, do this, do that." Never. Everything that I have done I did on my own. Not even a Godfather, nothing. And I had a lot of problems because of this. Even now, I don't even know how to play ball, O.K., because they never taught me how. And at school, well, at school I had a problem with the teacher and she came as I was playing in the morning and she tells me, "What are you doing?" And as I am white you notice when I blush when someone punishes me. "What are you doing?" I was playing there, bang! and she slapped me in the face. From now on I knew, I didn't play anymore at school, I didn't play any more at all. This teacher all of a sudden brought the moral home to me. I always admired this teacher, you know.

Q: In which period of your life did you have your first contact with Americans?

A: The first direct contact, you see, was when I was in New York to work with my uncle.

Q: In Puerto Rico you never had any real contact with a North American?

A: I always met Americans and all that but I never, you see, talked with them.

Q: What did you think of the Americans who visited the island while you were in Puerto Rico?

A: O.K., what I thought of them? Well, I had the opportunity as I always went for walks in San Juan, I walked also around there, having a good look. Many Americans and many tourists. Never, never did I like to harm somebody, you see, and for me tourism brings progress to the country and in any case you have to treat them well and tourism goes well. I never have problems, you see.

Q: And then you arrived in New York.

A: I was about twenty years old.

Q: And what did you do there?

A: Well, when I didn't have work in Puerto Rico, then my uncle called me and said to me, "I have an opportunity for you to work with me in the lab." He was the boss of the lab, Morales, "Large Size Photos Morales". This gave me the opportunity, and I said to myself, I'll profit from it, learn something. I had never had any contact with my uncle, eyeball to eyeball. I went there as if I went to meet him, you see. And he helped me quite a bit, he helped me quite a bit. And he told me many times, he told me many stories. He tells me, "I am sorry that I meet you now, after so many years, because I always thought of you. I would have liked to have you near me, because, you know, you had not left school or anything and I would have helped you better." But now he himself has problems, because he had heart surgery and it may be that he dies one of these days. This hurts me. He is in Puerto Rico right now and passed the three years after the operation and it may be that he loses his life one of these days and I wouldn't like to be out of the country, far away from him. I would like right now to be with him, at least spend the last days with him. Because he helped me quite a bit. He was the only one who helped me. It was late but certain.

Q: What was your impression of the rest of your relations in New York; also of the Puerto Ricans who lived there?

A: Well, my relations, my uncles, they have had their problems like everyone else, you know. But, you see, they in New York with their children, well, one of my uncles has four girls and a boy. They are all small, you see. A person with so many children, he can't, he has to take care of them.

Q: They are not rich?

A: No. And, well, the other one had already three children. They are adults, they are already married and one is actually in the Army here in Germany. He reenlisted. Well, when I arrived there, well, I met them and I lived in my uncle's house. Well, in a way I lived in three places during those ten months. I lived in Manhattan, in the Bronx, in Brooklyn, and afterwards I returned to Manhattan. In those ten months I roamed through all of New York, because I didn't have a place to stay. Because my uncle is too, I don't know, he belongs to those persons who want to know everything and, and I was there. You see, I was all quiet, you see how it is. They wanted to dominate and I told them, "No, this is not right!" Because as they invited me I was supposed to pay for everything but they shouldn't treat me this way, because I have never had a father, and as he is my uncle, and all. But this gets me in a certain way, you see, and I had certain problems with him. They weren't problems, you see, discussions. But in order to avoid them I left his house, and all. And I was in my cousin's house. I couldn't be in my uncle's house also because of "housing" and finally they told me, "Take an apartment for yourself", and I told them, "Here I don't live alone. In New York I don't live alone." It is dangerous. I told him. "I'm sorry, but I'm going to Puerto Rico." And I hat gotten some bucks together and all, and I bought myself a photography outfit and I said, "I'm going to Puerto Rico to buy a small photo lab business and make a few bucks." But certain things of the Puerto Rican race in the U.S. as I just said, well, I don't like them. Well, they behave in a way that is very different from ours.

Q: Which, for example?

A: Well, the way in which they live. They live in a very unorderly manner. They go into the street, shouting, talking tough to each other. And these streets are full of garbage; I don't know, I can't explain how these people live in such a way. In Puerto Rico you never see this.

Q: Did you also notice how they treat women in New York?

A: Well, these Puerto Ricans, I don't know, they live in a certain way which I don't like, there the women are a little strong, you see. The women who grew up there, well, they want to dominate. They want to dominate the man and the man also lives in a certain way, you see, like, there everybody lives in a way because everybody has to survive, you see. And you have to be careful in the street, because anybody can come and attack your life, for a dollar or two, you see. And I don't know, but women live too much, they want to have a lot of adventures and they have a lot of problems. They have a lot of problems. I heard a lot of discussions, many things that are not right at all, you see. I don't think it is her fault alone, it's both because both are guilty.

Q: Which kind of problems do you think of?

A: There are certain girls who want to dress in a way that the man doesn't like. Sometimes, well, she betrays him, sometimes he betrays her and he does it also to get rid of her. Sometimes, in the same street you don't expect the bad habits of the Puerto Rican women there. You look for someone, at a place. And this is really bad because there are enough women in the house. If they don't lose themselves in the house they do it in a place where you look for them, and there a lot is going on. And they go right there, and this is a problem, you know. Certain things are not well for both sides. Because I don't blame her alone but both of them, because you have to know to whom you get married.

Q: Your relations that you visited there, do they still speak Spanish?

A: My family still speaks Spanish, you see, but my uncle's children, many of them speak Spanish with difficulty. They speak a Spanish that hurts me when I hear their Spanish. Because they speak a Spanish that is so corrupted. I have a cousin whom I tried to correct, you know, and he went with me and I corrected him when he talked, you understand. I let him talk now as he wants, because they don't have anything any more. If you didn't learn till now, forget it! May he learn it himself.

Q: Did you have an experience of discrimination, of racism?

A: Well, once I saw for sure. My grandmother lives on 104th Street and Lexington. There is a police station there. And there lives a lady, she is crying in the hall and all that. And I asked her why the policemen don't help her, you know. She was in the police station, crying. And then this, you know, shocked me, and she being there crying. There are certain things in New York when you see that something is the matter with people you must not meddle with it, you see, because you then may look for problems. And I, you know, followed because I walked with a girl friend of mine. Then a little later I asked the girl, because my friend lived next to the police station, and I told her, "Listen, what is the matter with this lady who is crying over there?" And she says, "Because her son beat her up and they arrested him, see? They arrested him and then she came and got him out, you see. Then the son beat her up again; then, as this had happened before, well, the police didn't want to meddle with it. Because if they wanted to arrest the son to punish him and she did not want him punished, well, this time they didn't want to help. It's not right of the police also, but they pay her back in her own coin." And this is one of the things in New York that I have seen, that sons abuse their own parents. This is a bad thing.

Q: Did it happen to you that you were insulted in New York, for example that a white insulted you only because you were Puerto Rican?

A: One thing happened to me. It was a job, they offered me a job there. I didn't know any English and my job was to clean the tables, you see, pick up the dishes, you know. It was a place where you get a ticket, in the American restaurants you go through the place, you take the food, they punch the ticket, you go to the table, you sit down with the tray, you eat what you're going to eat, you take the ticket, take it with you and you pay and you leave the tray there. And my job was to pick up the tray, you know. Well, I come to pick up the tray. There was half a sandwich and I took the tray because there wasn't anybody. Then an American, an old guy, he tells me, "The sandwich which was there is mine," you know. I, you know, what could I say, you know. Then came the owner and cussed me out because I had stolen the gentleman's sandwich. But if the gentleman left it there and left, how could I know that he would eat half the sandwich, right? What did I know was that he then insulted me, you know. This was the first time. I stayed quiet. And, moreover, I didn't understand well what he said to me. Well, fine, then this thing happened. Well, I set the tables later, the gentleman, the owner, came, a gentleman, an American, I don't know if he was American, I don't know of which race he was, because in the U.S. there are so many races, Jews, Americans, so many classes, all look the same. I was setting the tables and I was very slow as they say. And he came and how he treated me, you know, making me a scene with a tray in front of the other people who were there; they realized, you know, what he did with me. This made me furious, you know, and I came, ran, pushed the cart, left for the kitchen, took off my clothes and left. Left without saying anything, I left and I told it to the guy who was there, a Puerto Rican, I said to him: "Look." I left.

Q: Did he insult you as a Puerto Rican or as a person?

A: He insulted me for this act. To have stolen this sandwich of this old guy. This was my mistake. I don't know, the Americans. For me the Americans are old, they are crazy. They are crazy I said, well, this old guy is crazy! But when the old guy came with that and the owner, oh, they can go to hell. I'm going home. There is always work. I went to work at another place. This was the first time that I was in New York and I didn't feel well there. There all the Americans are like that, bless them.

Q: What do you think of Puerto Ricans who forget their Spanish?

A: Well, sometimes you can't blame them, you see, because they were raised in America, they were born in America. And since they always talk to their friends in English, in English, in English. Yes, I would blame a little more the parents. Because you suppose the parents to be the ones who teach him Spanish; no, he doesn't have to learn it alone. It's the parents who must educate him in Spanish, not his school, because at school they don't teach it.

Q: Would it be ideal to learn both languages?

A: I think it would be a good thing. Now us, we lack both English and Spanish. Because we, as they say, we need to know English, because we are already so much tied up with the Americans. We live together with them, so we have to know English. It would help you. This help would be for me not for them.

Q: What are to you the major problems of today's Puerto Rico?

A: The problem now, as far as the government is concerned, you see, it is to blame for what is going on. The young people too, because we ourselves are to blame, really, for what is going on.

Q: And what is going on?

A: Well, at the university right now, you suppose that there are the people, the best equipped students. From there start all these things about independence. You suppose that it is the best, not the worst. And I don't know what these youths are doing who are studying now, because they see it in a certain studied way, that independence is a very pretty affair. It is very beautiful. But it is not as it is said but as it is done. And the government also is to be blamed and the young people are to be blamed. And, well, we have a complete depression, because jobs are very scarce. There is a high population and there is no work. And I think we should have a stable government and certain things, you see. There should be a strong hand. Someone should apply a strong hand to control everything. Because this always happens in such countries that everybody wants to do what he wants. There should be a hand applied to a country, which controls you; you work better then, everybody together.

Q: What does the name Albizu Campos mean to you?

A: Albizu Campos. Well, at that time he was of this revolution we had in Puerto Rico. And I don't know much about him, you see.

Q: Is he a hero to you, an interesting type, or is he history, or what?

A: For me he was a hero because he was a very intelligent person, you see. He was a hero, but he had certain ideas which I don't, which don't agree with the people, because at that time in which he wanted to achieve independence the people were worse off than they are now. Imagine that it would have been worse if they had achieved it.

Q: A violent act does not bother you?

A: No, no. I wouldn't mind, you see, to fight for my country. I would give anything for my flag. But I would give it for something that would be worth it. If it would be to defend it, I would do it, it doesn't matter. However, because I would not like to fight against my own people, because this is what's happening now we have to fight with our own people. But the power of those who want independence for Puerto Rico is very small.

Q: What would be your reaction if your sister got married to a white, English speaking Protestant? Would you like the idea or wouldn't you?

A: It wouldn't matter to me, you see. Two sisters are married for good. And it wouldn't matter to me with whom she got married if afterwards they would make a good couple. Certain things of his ideals, you see. And as to his race, it wouldn't matter to me, because right now, my sister's husband is "independentista". He is "independentista", he is a teacher. He doesn't work in his field, because he is one of those persons who are very impatient; they get mad at the slightest thing and he doesn't have much sensitivity for the children. And he is not working as a teacher, he's working, what do you call it, in the courthouse of Caguas, one of the biggest courthouses, the Supreme Court of Caguas, he's working there. He is investigating the cases which they give him, on probation; he is investigating there, and all that. He is a good person, you see, but he has, you see, "independentistas" ideas. But what am I going to do? Different strokes for different folks.

Q: What do you expect from your future wife? What are the qualities that you ask for?

A: Well, right now, we are in a certain crisis, you see. I think if you marry a woman who can help you, it would be better to marry a woman who is only in the house, because right now at least the woman helps you at your work; she should work at least in the first period so that you get established. Because these days the Puerto Rican wife likes to stay in the house, but, you see, the custom is changing. The custom is going to be that the wife also goes to work. But the custom for life is always the woman at home. But I would like it that when I get married my wife would help me. We want to build the foundation. She should help me and I should help me, we should both help each other, and things are done in a better and faster way.

Q: And do you want her to go to work also outside the house?

A: Well, I wouldn't want her to work, but it would be better

Q: Let us suppose that one day your wife will have children. Which of you will take care of them?

A: Well, as I just said, for me, when I get married, in the first years we must have no children, because you can't get established. But after two or three years are over, when you know each other well. Because it can be that in these two years you have problems with your wife and there may be no other solution than a separation, well, that there is no victim, you see, no child, nothing. In this time if perhaps all goes well and you already get everything ready and your house furnished, and you have money; then come the children, because it's better for the children, you see, that her mother takes care of them. Because you don't have children for other people to keep them. It is bad, because the children grow bad habits towards their parents. It isn't the same. And it is the father who raises you, understand? When I get married I would like it that my wife raises the children.

Q: Do you think that the man has to have sexual experience before marriage or not and do you grant this also to women?

A: It is the custom with the Puerto Ricans, you see, with almost all Latin Americans that the wife should be a virgin, you see. Well, I really don't like it that my wife had relations with anybody, you see. It would be a good thing to have; let's suppose that I have my girl friend, it would be nice to have relations with her to see how you, how you, if you understand each other well, it would be nice, wouldn't it? But then she will not be a virgin.

Q: Let's suppose that you don't marry her. What about the other who follows you?

A: Just for this, it would then be the other guy's problem.

Q: Do you find this just?

A: I, for myself I hope not. Well, our custom is like that. I know that certain customs of certain people are used, but our custom is not like that and since it is not like that, well, I think I won't revolutionize it. I have to use mine, getting married to a virgin and trust in what happens then. I hope that one must know the person with whom one gets married, well. If you know your girl friend well, then I think you must know what to expect.

Q: What does it mean to you to have a good life? What do you expect from life?

A: Well, I think that these days what you have to have to live a good life is something that cannot be exhausted or destroyed, you see. This means that you have your house, your wife, your children and that everything is just great so that you can go ahead. And I think to have a good life is to have a good wife, some good children, a good house, and a job. It doesn't matter what kind of job it is, it should be a job in which you make money that you can bring to your wife, what your wife deserves. You don't have to bring her luxury but what she really needs, because you have your home not only with luxury but rather with love.

For me the most necessary is love, also money, because money is needed. But before money, love, understanding her.

Q: What are the ideas with which you want to raise your children?

A: Well, my idea as to the children is that your children, well, children sometimes behave in a certain very well mannered way towards the parents, but it may not be the same towards other persons. Because at times the child is afraid and behaves well in its house, but when it leaves its house it is a rascal, you see. This is why you have to know well how you raise them, because I think that if father and child and mother understand each other, I think there won't be any problem. But it has to respect its father like a friend, also a neighbor, you see, and other persons. Another thing, the child should not be humiliated by other persons. If I say that my son should never let himself be humiliated it doesn't mean that you tell him something and it's bad and it causes harm or that you come out saying bad things that he should pay for. You don't exactly have to talk to him in a bad way but rather in good words. You could explain and tell him you were wrong or something. You see, talking to him in a certain way. There should be an understanding between the two.

Q: What do you think of the Chicanos?

A: I have known now in the Army many races that I had never known before. I have known many Chicanos and almost always I ask them where they are from when I meet them. They are almost always from the States. They are from Mexico but they grew up in the States. All know English. All know English, some don't know Spanish like I know. They are good people but they are rather, ah, Americanized. They are very different from the Puerto Ricans. Because they are already, you see, they are closer to the United States. As they are so close, their customs are closer to theirs than our. Because in a certain way we have more things than they. But in the language, they have ruined the language more quickly than we, than the Puerto Ricans.

Q: Did you personally know a "curandero" or a spiritualist?

A: Well, I knew one of these persons who read cards, Spanish cards, "la brica" and all that. Well, I was there because I had problems. She told me several things but I don't know, I was there two or three times, but in the meantime I realized that it was something like humbug what she said, because she said certain things that anybody could have said, you know. She said certain things that you can later, as you think of them, relate to your daily life. No, for me, I don't believe in her. But I think that evil in people exists. It can be that a person works with evil, but the only one that I met was this one. Because I have always liked to live. I never liked to mix with those people since that time. But I think that evil exists and it may be true.

Q: Can it exist in a person?

A: It can exist in a person and this person can do you harm. I don't know the opinion of the other persons but it can be true.

6. René R.
   24 years
   East Harlem, New York (E)

Q: Were your parents immigrants from Puerto Rico?

A: Yes, they were. They were both born in Puerto Rico. My mother was born in Río Grande and my father was born in Río Piedras.

Q: When did they come to the U.S.?

A: My father came to the U.S. when he was just twenty-one years old. He was born in 1911, so I put it somewhere in the neighborhood of 1931. My mother came over, my mother was born in 1939, I think, '39, yeah, and she came over to the U.S. in '42, I imagine. My mother is now forty-eight, forty-nine, I don't know. And my father came over very young. Didn't get married to my mother 'till he was thirty-seven years old. He'd play around quite a bit.

Q: What kind of job did your father have when you were living with him?

A: Oh, when my father came over, he came over in, like he always told us, in a banana boat. [Laugh] He told us he came over in a banana boat, very poor, no money. He was from a family of twelve brothers and sisters altogether. And he was the first, the oldest of all of them, and he came over on the boat and he stayed with a relative, an aunt. And they found him a job. I believe he was doing, what was he doing? Ah, dishes at first. Then the war came somewhere along the line, and then he went to the Navy and was only in the Navy for six months when hot, scalding, water flung in his face and they discharged him. They didn't do no physical harm to him but they discharged him. Then he started on his, on all kind of work, but I never caught back that far on him, but he owned a couple of stores. He started out with a shoe store business, a grocery store business, another shoe store business, a clothing business, and so on and so on. And then he quit that altogether. Then, - I don't know if I should mention this - oh, he took the "loteria", the "bolita", which is the numbers racket. That's his side investment and that's where he makes most of his money. Sure, he's a banker and he makes quite a bit on that. It took him years to get up to that, but that's where he was, because he's retired and went to Puerto Rico recently. And well, I just got a letter saying that he came back, but my mother's still over there, so. I'll get back to that later. And he'd made most of his money. He just got arrested once, it's just a minor crime, you know. It's just gambling as to crime. And he got only arrested once for all over the years he did it. He also worked; he owned a jewelry factory. He was partner of an uncle, and then he quit that and he stuck with the numbers.

My mother was, let's see, she was a secretary. She's a very intelligent woman. She has more schooling than my father. My father, by the way, only went up to eighth grade. And he, as he also said to us, he was raised the rough way, you know. A penny here, a penny there, he was very pinchy about money. He said, the way we spent it and all the other stuff, and when he was growing he was lucky to have a nickle. My mother, she's a very religious and a very nice person I could say. She's very understanding; she is kind-hearted. Both of them speak perfectly good English and Spanish, actually. And my mother, she has a little college. She is a secretary for the government now in Puerto Rico, not for the government directly but in the administration branch. She was a secretary in the Medical Center Hospital in New York on 168th Street and Broadway. After she never worked. When she got married she quit working. She had the babies and she didn't go to work when we were approximately fifteen years old. I was the youngest, me and my twin.

Q: How many children were you?

A: Three, three boys. The older boy, Nelson, he's twenty-six next month, January 30th. And Rubin and myself is twenty-four, just turned twenty-four last week.

Q: Where are your brothers now?

A: Both have their Master's Degree. Nelson is a banker, he's a manager at a banker's trust. Rubin is going to a doctoral school, he's going to a medical school. Now he works as a pharmacist, he still doesn't have a license as a pharmacist, but he works in the capacity as a pharmacist illegally also. And he works in a drug store. He been doing that for since he was very young, since he was seventeen, eighteen years old. He gradually moved up there and that's what he's doing now. And he's going to medical school now trying to become a doctor.

Q: Do you think there are any differences between a Puerto Rican family living in New York and a Puerto Rican family on the island?

A: Yes, a very slight difference, not a major. Just that in Puerto Rico they're mostly raised; I believe, this is just my opinion, cause I don't really know for facts, they're raised in a very more disciplined way. In New York you tend to lose this. Parents tend to lose control of their children. The Puerto Rican child, because the environment outside is the streets, not in the house. The house is run the same, more or less, but once they get out on the streets, that's when they start learning the bad things and associate with the wrong person which they can't help, because that's right in the neighborhood. But more or less they have about the same kind of upbringing in both families, because I have relatives that were raised there, and I was raised in the city. I believe we got the same upbringing, more or less.

Q: Were you ever in Puerto Rico?

A: Yes. Three times I can recall. I stayed, the longest I stayed was two months when I was thirteen. I stayed for two months, I stayed at a vacation at my mother's. And I came back for a wedding of my cousin, when I was sixteen. And I went one more time when I was seventeen.

Q: We were talking about your Spanish before. Do you know Spanish? How good is it? Are you English-speaking mainly?

A: I do. I do understand completely. But my vocabulary in Spanish speaking is very poor, I imagine due to the fact, 'cause I can't roll my "r"s. I cannot pronounce the "r" like "Rodriguez". When I was a kid they always used to make fun of me, 'cause I can't pronounce. Not my parents, the neighbors and the friends. So I got a complex, I imagine, and I wouldn't speak it unless I was home with my parents. They didn't make fun of me, they encouraged me. And I never got to speak it, and then I regret it now. I love the language; I'm proud of it, but I just can't speak it that well. I do speak it now; I mean I'm not embarrassed even though I can't roll the "r"s. And I'm not ashamed of it at all.

Q: Can you read a newspaper?

A: Yeah, I could read it, but not as good as English. Very slow. Like I said, I never have no schooling in Spanish, in reading or writing. I could write it also if I could speak it again in mind right. But this is another thing.

Q: Where did you go to school in New York?

A: Oh, I, let me get this straight. I was born in Woman's Hospital on 116th Street; we were then living on 143rd Street on Broadway. I lived there till I was eight years old. I was right on the same street, on Amsterdam Avenue and that was called "Parochial School". Like I said, I guess I was fortunate, because my father did make a little more money than most Puerto Ricans at that time. And he sacrificed to make us go to a parochial school. And the name of the school is "The Lady of Our Lord's." It was a very good school. I went there even though we moved out of there and got up town, out of the district. We weren't supposed to go to that school no longer, but they still let us, because my mother participated in all the events. She also was a substitute teacher.

Q: Was it run by Puerto Ricans?

A: No, nuns. Parochial, Catholic school.

Q: Were the nuns Puerto Rican?

A: No, no. The nuns were of the Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That's the Order.

Q: Spanish wasn't taught?

A: Spanish was not taught. There was, it was mixed. There were Blacks, whites and Puerto Ricans; Mexican kids in New York is very scarce.

Q: Were you happy in that school?

A: Yes. I was until I got to the sixth grade. That's when my first, the first change of life started and that's when I started getting downhill, when I had problems, when I got to sixth grade in parochial school. I don't know, I guess I was the president, I got and did something in the school which got me expelled. I don't know. I'm not ashamed of what I did. I just went ahead and I wrote a note with profanity on it towards the teacher, towards the nun, and placed it on the desk, you know, just for a joke. And as a matter of fact, of the three of us brothers I'm the only one my father had a hard time with. My other two brothers, they were straight "A"s and straight everything. I just had a hard time comprehending the school work. I was a lot slower and my mother had to constantly spend time with me just to catch up. And I also had a private tutor. Anyway, I wrote a note to her and this got me expelled, in the sixth grade. O.K., I was twelve years old. Eleven or twelve, eleven and a half. O.K., so they got me expelled out of school which I regret. And I went to a public school, next to the house where I was living on 159th street. It was PS 128 and I didn't like that place at all. It was very bad.

Q: Why?

A: Private school is discipline. It was run well. The nuns actually care of the instruction given. The actually help you and they also give you a firm hand. You step out of the line, they have permission to use the ruler or whatever they had. They used it on you. And it was very disciplined and I liked the school. When I went to public school, that's when I got started getting bad influence and I started going wrong.

Q: What did you do?

A: Well, right there I started smoking marihuana for one. It was introduced to me in sixth grade. And it was right there in public school. And then I had girls, believe it or not. I had this one girl, was crazy about me, I don't know why. One day after school she ran me down with a bunch of other girls, you know, Black girls and white girls. And they ran me about three blocks. I couldn't run no more. And she finally caught me, and they threw me on the floor just for her to kiss me. And I was sixth grade and I was fighting the girl. I hated the kisses and all this. I wasn't for girls then, I was only twelve years old. The next year I was ready. [Laugh] Well, she kissed me and everything, but public school was bad. There was a lot of profanity in public school. I'm not saying, I'm not blaming it all on public school but there were poor people in public school. People whose parents didn't care about them, they didn't care the way they came to school; if they came to school. Things like this, you know. In school itself they used to be talking and playing around. You really couldn't get a good education in public school. I spent a whole year there and from there I went to PS 115 for seventh grade, 'cause elementary school only goes up to sixth grade in the public system, not in the parochial. I went to seventh grade and there I started going wrong again, playing a lot of hookie.

Q: What did you like outside of school? What kind of things were you interested in?

A: I wasn't interested in nothing. I just, oh, outside of school, going to parties, drinking wine, smoking pot, all of this. I was very well with the girls. We used to go to either a girl's or a guy's house whose parents were both working and we bought bottles of wines. We bought the cheapest liquor and beer you could buy. We used to buy some wine and some one would buy some pot. We used to party up there and have a good time. That's when I started, in seventh grade, doing this, playing hookie. I didn't to it in sixth grade. I graduated from seventh grade and that's when my parents, they saw that something was happening to me and they said, "O.K." They went and talked to the Catholic parochial school again. And they sent me back again. But they put me back a year and that's where it hurt me the most. It hurt my pride, 'cause my twin was up a year ahead of me and I was behind him. And I had a bad, a negative, attitude when I finished in eighth grade, 'cause parochial school goes up to eighth grade and then you go to high school. I didn't want to go to a Catholic high school. I went to a public high school, George Washington High School, which is located 193rd, and that's where it started and ended the worst. I got to the ninth grade and I played a lot of hookie that year, but I managed to get by that year. The tenth grade started and it only lasted half the year. Half the year was in December.

That's when I also turned sixteen, 'cause December tenth is my birthday. That's when I was eligible to quit school. My parents couldn't take it any more. As a matter of fact, when we go back to fifteen years old, they took me to the psychiatrist, 'cause they thought I was crazy. Let me get back, I was also involved in gangs. My brothers were, I was in gangs.

Q: What do youth gangs do?

A: I was in a gang called the "Social Lords" and also in a gang called the "Young Barons".

Q: What's the difference between the "Young Lords" and the "Social Lords"?

A: Oh, the "Social Lords" was the older. I was a "Young Lord" when I started out. And you started out any age. Any age you get initiated. The way the initiation goes: they form a chain of the members both side of the one. On each line they either got a stick, a chain, some object, some heavy object. But no knife, nothing to sure kill you but something to hurt you. Oh, you start at the end of this chain, and the chain may be twenty men long on each side, sometimes longer. And you'd have to run through this, without falling. If you fall in-between you're gonna get beat until you get out of it or until you're outcold and then you flunked the initiation: you can't get into the gang. But that was the initiation. You had to run through this chain, make it through, and you were initiated. Oh, I was initiated; I was laid up in bed for a couple of days. We wore sweaters. That was our symbol that we were participating together. We had black background with purple rings. V-neck sweaters. We had a derby hat on the front with a cane and a pair of white gloves for the symbol. On the back we had "Social Club". That way they can't say, "That's a gang, you know." A protection from the law. And our names on the right, no, on the left above our hearts. And that was it. And our sweaters symbolized what gang we were in. We have a President, a Vice-president and a War Lord. The War Lord's function was to coordinate the fights. If we go to different neighborhoods, sometimes it gets into a rumble, a fight. And they say, "O.K., we meet you, The War Lords meet each other." They organize where we gonna meet, what time we gonna start, and everything and this.

Q: What are the causes for a fight?

A: If you look at it now, it's very stupid. No, not any causes, not any. A white man going with a Puerto Rican girl would cause a fight.

Q: There were only Puerto Ricans in the "Lords" or could they admit Blacks?

A: Yes, we had Black and we had white. Very few now - maybe we had three or four whites. But it wasn't many. These whites, as a matter of fact, were around the neighborhood of Puerto Ricans. That's why they were in it. Now, if they come from a white neighborhood and came into our neighborhood they would be chased out of that neighborhood, most likely.

Q: How big was the gang?

A: Oh, when I quit it, it was close to about eighty people. It was a pretty sized gang.

Q: How long did you stay in that gang?

A: I was there a year.

Q: How old were you then, sixteen?

A: Fifteen and a half till sixteen and a half.

Q: Did your parents object to that?

A: My parents didn't know till I was sixteen, close to sixteen and a half, near the end. I used to hide the sweater and everything. Sure!

Until they found out I was playing hookie. My father actually caught me one day. He was hiding across the street and I saw him when I came out of school that morning. He followed me, and the bus stop is right of my building and he stopped for the children going to school. I kept on going and I saw him following me. He was all disguised and everything. And I walked for about five blocks. I turned the corner. He ran to catch up not to lose me and I stood at the wall on the corner and he passed me. I say, "Hi, pop!" He beat the hell out of me! [Laugh] He took me to school, that day, that's when I got expelled. We went and saw the Dean and I told him, "Listen, I don't want to go to school no more." This and that. My father was very upset. And I quit school. Oh, then, Carlos, he was not a good friend of the family. He was like me, he was older than me as a matter of fact, he's about six years older. He had the same kinds of problems, but worse than me. I guess he saw that I was going the wrong role, and he, like, grabbed me and guided me. He took me in and got me a job with his firm. I started, at sixteen, I started working at "F & G Fotomaster's" in New York, down at 52nd. Now, my boss was an Italian. I was a photostat operator. I reproduced photostats, you know. Blow them up, bring them small.

Q: Were you on drugs after you quit the gang?

A: I was never on heavy drugs, no. Just pot. I sniffed glue also.

Q: Why do you think you did it then?

A: Because I was with the crowd. That's why I did it. I wasn't with the gang. I was with the crowd, people who were around, you know. Oh, I was with these people, these girls one night, and if you don't participate, they think you're gonna fink on them, which means you gonna go and tell the cops or somebody. Or you're a punk, you know. They don't want you, so I did it. Just to be with the crowd. I wanted to belong to them.

Q: You didn't enjoy it very much, or did you?
A: Oh, sure! I got the throw, yeah. The glue, no, the glue I did that by mouth. And I quit it, and I didn't like that at all. I did glue and also a spot remover. You sniff it and it only gives you a spaced out, oh, I timed it once, about a minute. That's all, it's only a minute. And you put it again in a handkerchief and do it again, you know. But I found out later it's bad and puts holes in your lungs, that's the sniffing glue. So I quit that.
Q: When did you quit smoking pot at all?
A: When I came in the Army. The Army, in a matter of fact, changed my life.
Q: Did you trust this friend?
A: Oh yes, I did trust him. He understood me, I guess. See, my parents, I never listened to my parents, my mother and my father. That's why I gave them a hard time. Now I realize how hard I gave them. I really gave them hell.
Q: Can you tell me some of the mistakes they made with you, that caused you to move away from them?
A: No, it was my doing. No, I don't think so, no. I was just in that age, in that time when I just couldn't be told what to do. I don't think anything would have been done to help me. I just had a mind of my own and I did what I wanted to do no matter if I hurt them or not. I got arrested once. Oh, I also, in this gang group we had a singing group, and I belonged to the singing group. I didn't belong to the group itself; I just participated. And we were practicing in this building in the hallway when this one boy called Billie, a very bad fellow, as a matter of fact, he's in prison right now. For murder. That's what I heard. Well, anyway. Billie came around. He was young also, he was a year older than I was. He came with a car. He said the car was his father's and everything. And he needed some money for some gas. So

this guy named Albert, he said, "I'd loan you some money but I only got a ten dollar bill." So he said, "Come on, let's go, I'll drop you, get into the car, we'll go to the gas station, get the gas, two dollars you want to borrow, give me back the change." He said, "O.K." We got in the car. We had some wine, we started drinking some wine and everything. We got to the gas station, got the gas. So I said, "Oh, how about dropping us off back over there 'cause we got to practice." He said, "Oh, come on. I'll take you guys for a ride." "No, no." "Oh, let's go for a short ride." We went down a part where you're not supposed to drive when a fire truck is coming. And he was driving down there. The police, there just happened to be a police, and they saw him and they started pursuing a chase and put the lights on. And that's when Bertie went "chung" and started taking off. "Bertie, stop! Don't you have a license?" "No." "Isn't this your father's car?" "No." Oh, my God! And we started going. And he made a left turn. He went down about five blocks, made a left turn into this big, wide avenue, I think it was Third Avenue on East Side, and there was a road block. And the police had the guns out and everything. And he stopped the car, and he told us to get out. And I think this was one of the turning points in my life, 'cause I was embarrassed as hell. I was fifteen years old and I was embarrassed to hell just being out there, being put on handcuffs and being taken to jail. I was taken to jail and everybody bugged me because I was fifteen. If you are sixteen and above you are prosecuted as a criminal, fifteen and below you are a juvenile. I was lucky, very lucky. And also, my cousin, my mother's cousin, he's a police officer, a detective at that time, in the New York City Police Department, and he came. Well, the staff sergeant called home and my father was just eating. And when he got the message that I was in jail, that's when I said he had a heart attack. I didn't know it, but my mother told me that he started vomiting his food, had a bad indigestion and he started to cry and was really upset. My father came down, and my uncle, and my cousin, the police. Somehow they manipulated it, they got it off the record that I was even arrested. But I did go the next day to a juvenile officer with my father; we spoke to him and I agreed to him that it would not happen again. This was before I quit school, fifteen years old. Oh, that was just a month before I quit school. Like I said, I quit school December 16. It wasn't gonna work out any more. I had no enthusiasm and I went to work with my friend called Carl. And I started working with him. I ran with him home, 'cause I was getting pressured at home. I got paid on Friday and didn't come home till Sunday and I was broke! My whole paycheck!

Q: What did you do, drink?

A: No, girls. I left the gang by the way. I left the gang. I saw that the people were wrong. And I was with another kind of friend, a pretty good friend. But they /i.e. the gang/ were using me. Like I said, I was younger than they were. And in order for me to get into the group I had, they pushed me. I spent money and they accepted me, I guess. I took them everywhere. I had girls and I used to go to parties and you had to pay your way in and all this other stuff. My mind wasn't straight yet either.

Q: Were there any racial warfares with your gang? And who were your enemies usually?

A: Yes. No particular enemy: whoever came along, whoever came along. It was Spanish also. We also fought Puerto Ricans. In fact, we had a fight with "The Rams". They were a men group. We were just a teenager gang. We had a fight with Puerto Rican men. They were men! They were called in Spanish "jivaros" and they were hicks, you know. And we fought with them once.

Q: What was the issue?

A: The issue I can recall. I think it was one of the guys wearing a jacket with a girl. They came along and one man grabbed his girl by the buttocks. And he turned around and slapped him and said, "O.K., we meet you, we get back. We meet under George Washington Bridge." That's where it took place. George Washington Bridge, and we met down there one night. And that night we talked about it and went down there and a couple of guys got shot. But nobody got killed. And that was it. I never got hurt. I never got arrested for none of that. I was lucky. I was at parties also when the police came. We had fights with a white gang once. I was playing hookie as a matter of fact, and one of the guys went down and took a breath of air at hookie time during the day, and these guys from a white, a Jewish neighborhood, was walking by and they were a football team. And my friend made fun of them, and then they went back and got their friends. They got a couple, about six carloads full of guys, and then. My friend was still standing in front of two of them and they came out with sticks and everything. And then my friend runs up the stairs to where the party was and said, "Hey, rumble!" And everybody ran and got the knives out of the kitchen, got the brooms out, got everything to grab at this girl's house and we took the whole house apart and we ran out of the house like madmen. And just the psychological fact of these, this gang. They were still by their cars, six cars in the street. And just the psychological effect, seeing us, coming out, screaming and yelling, with these things in our hands. They got so petrified that they ran! They ran! We caught one and we beat him, but he got away and ran. There was a grocery store at the corner with empty milk boxes. We took the milk boxes, broke all the windshields of the cars, took the knives and took all the upholstery of the cars, and damaged the cars completely, as much as we can. People screaming "murder", and everything. Then, from the distance, we heard the police, everybody ran back upstairs like fools, except me and my other friends ran two blocks away. We were clear. Then we started thinking, "Wow", the cops just arrived at that time and we started thinking, if we don't get back to these guys they may think we ran out on them. So we run back in there and we got to the basement and the elevator, and the police saw us. And then we ran again and got away. My friends all got arrested and got charged with juvenile charge. Me and the guy I was talking about, we didn't get caught.

Q: How was your reputation with the other guys?

A: Good, I came back and they saw me.

Q: What would have happened if they saw you running, not coming back?

A: I used to think they'd say, "Where were you? Why didn't you get caught with the rest of us?" One of these things. You had to give an explanation. I don't know why we did it. We just did it 'cause we didn't want them to say that we ran out.

Q: When did you have your first girl in bed?

A: Oh, the first girl I had when I was playing hookie - I was fifteen. Let me get to it, this is a funny story. We were just underneath the George Washington Bridge again. I don't know, George Washington Bridge is everything. The Hudson River, a dirty, polluted place. But it was the Hudson River. It was summer time as a matter of fact and we were swimming, playing hookie, we were near the end of school. And this girl - what is her name? - I remember her name so long - Bernado was her name, a Puerto Rican girl as a matter of fact. And we were five boys and five girls there, playing hookie. And we just finished coming out of the Hudson River, swimming, and somebody mentioned this, "Oh, grab your girls and make it!" And everybody grabbed a girl and this girl grabbed me. So we ran. As a matter of fact I was swimming in my underwear, not swimming trunks, 'cause I couldn't get out of the house with swimming trunks. She had her swimming trunks. And we went in the bushes and then, you know, we were following them. I was caressing her and kissing her and everything. You know. And I put, I undressed her, and, you know. O.K., then I got an erection and, I knew where it went and everything and I got it in, and I was going away. And all of a sudden felt something coming and I thought I was going to urinate and I stopped. [Laugh] I stopped in the middle of what was supposed to be the climax, I stopped! I said, "Hold it, wait a minute! I got to take a piss." And I got up and I stood there and nothing coming. And she just stood there and laughed at me! [Laugh] She stood there and laughed at me! That was my first sexual contact which I didn't even know I was getting a climax. 'Cause I never masturbated before that either. I had wet dreams, yes, but never masturbated or had sexual intercourse.

Q: Then she wasn't a virgin any more. Did she know what was going on?

A: Oh, yes. She was a whore. At that age, she was also fifteen, she was a whore, she was considered a whore. Sure. She was well known. Up to this day she is well known.

Q: After the photographer's firm, what happened?

A: I stayed at the "I. & G. Photomaster's" for a year, not quite a year, ten months. Then I quit. I don't know why I quit. Oh, because he wouldn't give me a pay raise. I was making, I started with eighty dollars a week. Then I got up to ninety dollars a week. Then I asked him for a hundred and he wouldn't give them to me. So I quit. I left my friend Carlos there. But he got me a connection with another agency, "American Blueprint". And they gave me a hundred. I started with a hundred. I worked there, a few blocks away, Fifth Avenue. I worked with them only about two or three months, and as a matter of fact when I turned seventeen years old, I joined the Army. My father did not want me to go into the service.

Q: Why?

A: 'Cause of the Vietnam conflict. He was afraid of that. I wasn't thinking of that. Right there, I was seventeen, working at "American Blueprint", away from college. Just being away, I started thinking of my life. What I'd been doing, what the past two, really three years, the things; I'd been hurting my parents. I'd been hurting myself. I was going nowhere. I ended up to a criminal.

Q: What made you think that all of a sudden?

A: It just came to my mind, I guess. The job I had. I had casual clothes to go to work. I changed to dirty clothes when I got there because of the hypo and the fluids, the chemicals. And it seemed I started that I was realizing what my life was going to be, working in dirty clothes, having no high school. You know, all of a sudden you read in the paper you can't get a job without a high school education and this and that. I was embarrassed, like I said. I was put back once, I missed a whole year. Again, I was two years behind. I didn't want that. So, the best thing I thought I'd join the Army. I went over and had an interview and they was going to accept me. But I needed my parents' consent. I got the papers all ready and I took it to my parents. I talked to my father and my father said "No." Then I went to my mother. I said, "Listen, ma." I told her exactly how I felt, "I'm going to be no good. I'm giving you a hard time. I've been doing this, 'cause the environment and the city there, and the people I am associating with. That's why I am the way I am. Do me a favor and sign for these three years in the Army and let me make up my mind what I want to do in my life. Let me get away from the environment, the city. Just get my mind at rest, just know what I want to do." My mother thought it was logical and sensible, so she talked to my father I guess in bed that night. I don't know what they did, but the next day my father talked to me again and he consented. And, you know, my mom had her way around my father. I got a loud mouth. But my father just got the loudest mouth. He scares you just by looking at you. He looks like a cop and is very loud, but he got a heart of a kid. My mother is gold. Everybody is in love with her. And they finally let me go. And the day I went to the Army, as a matter of fact, the day I was driving down there, two good friends and about three good girl friends, they were in the car with my father driving. My brother was in there in the car, everybody was piled in the car and they said, "It ain't too late, Renee, it ain't too late!" (They didn't call me René, they called me Renee with two "e"s at the end.) "No," I said, "I'm gonna go, I'm gonna go." And they were begging me all the way down to Whitehall Street where I signed up, and then it was too late for them. And that was the best move I made in my life, joining the Army, not right there and then, but as I went along, yeah.

Q: What do you want to do once you are out of the Army?

A: I like to stay in the Army. I got a taste of military police work; I like police work. That's my field.

Q: Why do you like it?

A: Oh. It's so satisfactory for me. I feel like I'm accomplishing something, I'm helping people. I see the way I grew up in crime and in the drugs. I went back to leave in New York and I saw kids, KIDS, I mean actually ten years old, hooked on heroin! I've seen them in the streets, begging for money.

Ten years old, on heroin! It wasn't like that when I was growing up. Heroin was not that big of a thing. It was out there, but it was not as big as going to the high schools. Now it's going to the elementary school just about. It's very, very bad. And I really hate it. I hate that hard drug. I hate it. I'd love to catch the pusher and not only that. I just like police work. It's not just an every day boring job. You got to use your mind and you got to use your intelligence. It's exciting. It's dangerous, yes. Not in the military, but in the big city.

Q: You don't mind the danger?

A: No, I don't. I don't think of the danger. I think of the satisfaction I get from accomplishing the job, something I like doing.

Q: What do you think should be done in the big cities to get rid of crime?

A: They got these hit squads. They go out like, I don't know if you've read the book Serpico. They're out just like a bum. They got beards, long hair like hippies and everything: just like a regular scrum of the street, but really they're police officers. They hang in the slums, they drink booze, they smoke dope like the rest of them, lying on the sidewalk. But they are actually watching all the time and they know what's going on, the crime that's gonna happen. And they're right on top of it once it happens, they got them. And I like the undercover work and undernarcotics, I like that. I mean the homicide portion of it, that's something else. I'm mostly drugs.

Q: Do you think there should be some kind of education for parents, too?

A: Yes, they should know more about it. My parents didn't know anything about drugs. They still insist that marihuana is harmful. It will cause you to deteriorate and also mess up your mentality system and everything, which isn't true at all. I have smoked marihuana quite a bit. I also smoked hash. It doesn't do nothing. Heroin and all these others that are put in your system really mess you up bad. Smoking isn't that bad. You get a headache every now and then. They want to make it legal now. Once they make it legal I may start over again, but it's illegal now, so I don't mess with it, 'cause I'm thinking of my future, my career and my family, naturally.

Q: What does Puerto Rico mean to you? Is it close, is it a far-away place? How do you feel about it?

A: Puerto Rico is close to me, I think, 'cause I'm proud of the flag, for one thing, and I got patches. I wear the flag on my pants also, in my car. I believe, I'm not quite up with what's happening in Puerto Rico, what they're up to now, but, you know, I believe the independence. They all like to be. As far as I know, the United States are trying to make them a state. They don't want to be a state, they want to stay as a territory, because they don't want to say, "We are the United States." They want to say, "We are Puerto Rico. We're small, but we'll be united the way we are."

Q: You like that?

A: Yes, I do, I do. I really do. They're very proud people also.

Q: Are you proud of the Spanish-American heritage?

A: Sure, sure I am. I really am. I can't say for myself it's the best, but there's others. Spanish, Latin culture is really a good culture and I really love it. I wish I could get more into it. I wish I was stationed in Puerto Rico or Panama, somewhere where Spanish is always talked, 'cause I know that my Spanish would get up to par.

Q: What do you feel is especially good or beautiful in Puerto Rican life?

A: The island itself is a magic. Oh, Puerto Rico is beautiful. It's paradise. I cannot live there. I need a big city. I'm used to the city life. I'm used to the rush and the people. I cannot live in the country, in the suburbs; I cannot live that way, 'cause it's not my way. My wife, she says she likes it, but I know she doesn't. She's scared, she's scared of being alone and she doesn't like to live in the country. So I'm used to the city. I like the city. Puerto Rico is a beautiful island. I mean, it's not big, but...

Q: What about the people?

A: Friendly, friendly as could be. Yes, very friendly, polite to you.

Q: Is there racial discrimination?

A: No, there isn't. Not in Puerto Rico, not in my opinion.

Q: Would you call North American society racist?

A: Yes, I would. It's clear. As a matter of fact, there is this one guy, he's in my unit. He just went back to the States. He's very prejudiced against Blacks. He'll be back. He, in fact, if he sees a girl, I don't care how attractive she is, how beautiful and lavish and everything. If she's with a Black, he will not associate with that girl. I don't care that girl drops her drawers in front of him; he will not touch her because she has been with a Black. He cannot stand Negroes. I'm not prejudiced. The way I look at it, I would treat a person the way I want to be treated. And that's the way I look at it, skin difference or anything else. O.K., to get back to prejudicism, my daughter, you see, my daughter, if she gets up in age and thinks of marrying one. If the situation is still the way it is now, I do not want her to get married to a Black, 'cause she's gonna run into difficulties. That's the reason why I would be against it. But if the time, well, the time probably will change, 'cause she's only seven years old now and time's gonna change. If it does change and it won't hurt her or her family, then I won't mind. I will consent to it. But see, now this generation there's a lot of prejudice against people, toward the Blacks and everything, towards Latinos also. I will go against her marriage out of the race, or into a Negro race because of the way she probably will be hurt by gossip and everything. Just looking after her welfare. But prejudiced I'm not.

Q: Do you feel that the Black race is superior to the white race or the Latin race?

A: They think they are; they do. They think they gonna overcome, and they gonna be more superior than the white race. Many times a lot of Blacks would get away with murder because they're saying that "because you're prejudiced that's why you're doing it", and they would get away with it, even though they're wrong. A lot of Blacks use it as an excuse and they don't care a damn if they will help their race up, and make it better. A lot of them are just plain scum, out of the truth. They don't care. The same with a lot of whites. The same with a lot of Puerto Ricans, I don't care. This color doesn't mean nothing to us, you know. But when I start to think about it, this guy comes to my house and starts talking about racism and this and that. And starts saying, "You guys, you Puerto Ricans, you don't like it, messing with that woman." That's when I start doing away with it. The man's mind is already fixed to say what he thinks. And I ain't gonna change it, and I don't want to change it, 'cause I'm not able to change his mind. I just won't associate with him. That's the way I think about the thing. I'm not big enough to change the system the way it is now. I'm not big enough to attempt to do it.

Q: Suppose you were really powerful and you could change things in America, what would you change?

A: Oh, [pause] Welfare. I'd start with employment and start getting jobs for everybody. Look, they're getting jobs for these deserters, who deserted at a time when the country needed them for war. They deserted them; now they give them a job to come back to. And there's people out there in unemployment lines getting welfare. I'd quit the welfare. A lot of Blacks and Puerto Ricans and, I imagine, other people all over the States are abusing the welfare system. I know as a matter of fact there are Puerto Ricans, that I know for a fact, that are driving Cadillacs and are on welfare, you know. They're just bone lazy and just don't want to get out there and work. All that welfare is a scapegoat just to help them to make some more money, to make some more bread. That's about all it is. I would find jobs for them. I really would. I would try to get anything going, you know. If they live in a secluded place, poor, with rats going up the walls, then I believe it. There should be more investigation to it, 'cause they don't investigate that deeply to it, 'cause these guys, they're driving Cadillacs and live in the slums. They have apartments in the slums but that's for show. They really got a house out there in Long Island, where the rich people are.

Q: Is there anything else that you feel is important enough to be changed in America?

A: Yes, I think it would be mostly the jobs, for one thing. And the other thing would be integration towards the schools. The trouble they're having now in Massachusetts, Boston. They're having the trouble with integrating schools. Now I don't think it should be that way. That's the problem we're having in our society with racism and prejudicism. Like the young; raise them to be nonprejudiced, and when they get older they will make up their own minds. 'Cause they only think what older people put into them, because they were offended back in the old days. What happened in the old days is the past. Now is the time to change things. I don't know what else I'd do to change things. The Law. O.K., they changed the law on drugs, you know. If you get caught with an ounce of marihuana, smoking it, you get a fine. If you get caught with the same ounce, selling it, you get life imprisonment in New York City now. They changed the law. They are real strict now.

Q: Are you in favor of that?

A: Yes. I'm in favor for that. That's right. It isn't for marihuana itself. They made it for the hard shit, the hard drugs; the stuff people are dealing with. The pushers who is actually selling the stuff. They're the ones they made that law for to catch them, to put fear in them and to put them in life imprisonment if they're caught.

Q: And you are generally in favor of strong laws?

A: Sure towards the drugs, yes. Besides that and jobs, that's about it. I really feel I was never discriminated against. I never got turned a door down on me or anything like this or called a "spik" in meanness. Besides in rumble fights, but never in meanness. I'd look for a job and no one would say, "Hey, spik, come over here!" I was never confronted with that, no.

Q: Are you familiar with the term "machismo?"

A: No, I'm not.

Q: Do you expect your wife to be a virgin when you marry her or not?

A: No, it doesn't play a role for me. 'Cause she wasn't. I married her, she had a child already. As a matter of fact, of a Vietnamese. And now she is my own. I had her since she is eighteen months and she is my own. I changed her name. Her name used to be Yim, and now it's María. And boy, I love her more than anything in the world; she's my treasure. And now I got a son, born from my own, born from her. And he's an angel also. He's a devil. And that's all I wanna have, those two. A virgin of a woman is not necessary. As a matter of fact, I think a woman should have experience before I marry her, 'cause that's what most divorces are involved in, a woman that hasn't had experience. I do believe also in common law and also in living together, man and woman, before the matrimonial. Because they will have to know. Some people get divorced because the woman don't like the way the man brushes his teeth in the morning. And the man doesn't like the way the woman combs her hair or put her clothes on. People get divorced because of those ridiculous reasons and that's why they should live together a six months time period or so to really get accustomed living together. That's a big major point in my life, that me and my wife have lived two years before we got married.

Q: Do you think your parents would agree to that?

A: No. My parents, like I say, is prejudiced. My father, not my mother. My father is very prejudiced. As a matter of fact, out of the four years we have been in the States, just recently he turned towards my wife. My father, I had a hard time with him.

Q: What exactly did he object to?

A: Orientals. All he knows about Orientals is Chinese, maybe what he was told or maybe what he saw in the movie, I don't know what. But he thinks Orientals are peasants that eat rice all day long with their fingers and things like this which, really, it doesn't got that way.

Q: Do you know if your father believed that a woman should be a virgin before marriage? Was that important to him?

A: Yes. I think he does believe that too. And he also got disturbed because I married a fixed family already, a prearranged family. Now he is beginning to change; he is beginning to accept my daughter and accept the wife. And we had a hard time for four years, believe it or not. As a matter of fact, when I was on leave to come over here he came over to see his grandson, who he never saw, my son. He was thirteen months. And he came over and saw him and we had a party before I left and a lot of friends and neighbors were over. And I got a little drunk and that's when I let him have it. I mean, I put him down to shame and with true facts, real facts, how he hurted my wife and hurted me in the past four years we'd been together here. And how I changed.

Q: Did he refuse to contact her, for example?

A: Well, no, no, it wasn't that way. It was other ways. By saying things. My other brother got married, and him doing things like saying, "Oh, now I'm going to get my first grandchild," in public. Not accepting my María. Things like this. Other things built up and up. I could go on and go on. And I let him have it. Well, my brothers got more education, but I'm making more money right now. I got more to show. I got a whole house full with furniture with which I indebted until two months ago. I was about ten thousand dollars indebted. And I got a house full of furniture, I mean special furniture that I just bought and it's all mine. I got a car to show for. I got things to show for. I got things to show for, and now I start to save money and my brothers ain't even got that much yet. And they got Master's Degrees, and this and that, but they just started out. They didn't have nothing.

Q: You are a Catholic. Are you a believer?

A: Yes, I am. I was an altar boy. If you go to a Catholic school you must be an altar boy. And I was an altar boy even when I was in public school. But my religion stopped when I came in the Army, I believe. Now I still believe in a God and I still believe in going to church every Christmas. But I believe now that I do not have to go to church for God to listen to me. And the reason I do believe in this, 'cause of my parents, my father. My mother goes to church every week. My wife will go to church every weekend, 'cause she is very religious - she's Catholic. That's the only good thing I did marrying my wife, 'cause she's Catholic. I believe I could pray at home and God will listen to me. And the reason I believe in that, 'cause my father never went to church. Never. I went to a Catholic school. He pushed us into Catholic school and I never seen him in church except one time! At my brother's wedding, that was the first time, at my brother's wedding. I believe in a God, I believe in the Catholic faith, but I don't believe in, I think I'm lazy, or I don't know what I am, but I just don't think I should go to church every Sunday.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints, the power of the Saints?

A: Yeah, like most Puerto Ricans have. No, if I pray to God directly. I do not go to the Saints.

Q: Do you feel that there are evil spirits possible?

A: To get to that. /Laugh/ My father once took me to a psychiatrist, 'cause he thought I was crazy. I was fifteen. He also took me to a spiritualist, one of those Puerto Rican womans. And I slept with a red, red handkerchief with this bag, and it had all kinds of twigs in there. I had it under my pillow for months, and she always put a chain around me. I went to her house - a bunch of black dolls and voodoos and a lot of that stuff. And they did dance around me and threw water at me, and a lot a smoke and everything, and yelling in Spanish.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Ridiculous. I thought it was ridiculous. I didn't believe a bit of it. My father was happy.

Q: Did he believe in it?

A: No, he didn't believe in it. He did it, he thought it was another thing to help me out, maybe it might help me out, maybe it might change me. It was a superstition. Somebody must have talked to him, "Take him to this person and it may help him."

Q: He himself did not believe in it?

A: He never told me so, but I don't think so. I've never seen him participating in this, or my parents. I never seen them, nothing like that in the house. As a matter of fact, my close friend, a neighbor, is into that bag, you know. My mother never been in it. My mother's always a firm Catholic believer, you know.

Q: What exactly did that woman do?

A: She, I sat in a chair in the middle of the room, and she, it was a dark room, the windows were drawn and everything. And it had incense going through, a lot of plants around the room, a lot of dolls around the room, a lot of pictures.

Q: What kind of pictures?

A: Those kind of pictures [pointing at my etchings by Brauer and Fuchs]! It was things like that, more or less! Some angels, yes, some angels. I sat there, and she mumbled a lot of stuff in Spanish and was running around, her face was round, and she was yelling. She had water here, she has a black powder here and she has some other stuff in another bowl. She got a fire going in the middle, she threw the powder in there and the water she threw at me.

Q: How long did this last?

A: An hour. They have a lot of them in New York, Puerto Rican spiritualists. They actually believe in the spirits.

Q: You don't?

A: No, of course not! My wife is scared, is petrified of spirits. If you mention ghosts, she is scared to sleep there by herself.

Q: Do you think that the Blacks move too fast, that they progress too fast?

A: No, they're not pushing too fast. They should get what's coming to them. Everybody is an equal, and they should be treated as such. They should have every opportunity to get just as good a job, just as good a position as the next man. And they are just pulling off the constitutional rights, which is just fair. If they're pushing hard, there is no such thing as pushing hard enough. They should get what they got coming to them.

Q: Which groups or institutions hurt minority groups most?

A: I don't keep up with that. I don't even know. No.

Q: Which political leader do you like among those that I am going to mention: Carmichael, King, Ché Guevara, Castro, Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", the "Black Muslims"?

A: Kennedy is the only one, as a President and as a person. As a matter of fact, he was respected in Vietnam. I was in the jungles of Vietnam and I saw his picture out in the middle of nowhere, in straw hutches. People believed in that man. That's probably why he got killed. He was so powerful, he was that good a person.

Q: Who killed him?

A: It wasn't Communist. Well, it could have been Communist, but I blame it was a group. The one who killed him actually, Oswald, was just a pay-off, a punk. Then the other guy, the one who killed Oswald, Jack Ruby, he was a higher professional killer, a bigger one. But I actually believe it was politics. Politics, maybe. It could have been politics; it could have been a bunch of things. I'm down here and they're up there. It could be politics, it could be Communist, I say it could be both. He was strong, he was a strong person and he could have ended that Vietnam War sooner. He could have had peace and harmony in the world. He could have had the power to do so.

Q: What do you think of "Black Nationalism"?

A: No, I don't think they should have their own states. If they wanted their own state, they might as well get their own country and go back to Africa and be with Blacks. As a matter of fact, whites went to Africa too. [Laugh] If they want their own state, let them find it in Harlem or something, but I don't think they should have it. Puerto Rico is not run by Puerto Ricans, really. There's a governor of Puerto Rico; he's Puerto Rican, but the rest, the business and the establishment, is Jewish and other whites. They really run that. They got the power there, the money power, you know. If just the island were there for us.

Q: Coming back to New York again, who do you think rules in New York?

A: The Jewish, Jewish. But they're getting scared. Jewish are fading out of New York, slowly but surely. My neighborhood. I moved into a Jewish neighborhood. I moved there when I was nine years old. And now, that neighborhood is Black and Dominican. Dominicans are infesting New York. As a matter of fact, that's one of the facts why my parents moved, because of Dominicans. They got robbed. My father got robbed twice. He got robbed waiting for a traffic light. And the other time it was in broad daylight at twelve o'clock noon in the elevator of our building. He got robbed by two Dominicans. He caught them, though.

Q: Why are they violent?

A: I'm not blaming the races, no, no. They're completely different. They come, the way I believe it, they come from a poverty country, 'cause the Dominican Republic is a poor country now. And they come into this New York City which has many advantages for them and everything. Some who can't get no work will get out and rob. The uneducated ones, most of them, I don't say all of them, I say the majority of them that I have seen. I do not have any friends among the Dominicans. I have maybe some I say "hello" to, but not as personal friends. They weren't there when I left for the Army, at seventeen, but they were there when I came back from Vietnam. And it was a completely changed neighborhood and everything. The place is dirtier now. They throw their garbage out of their windows. I'm not saying they are insanitary, I don't wanna cut that race down. But that is what I've seen. Our neighborhood wasn't dirty when I left, and now I know damn well it wasn't changed overnight because more Puerto Ricans moved in. It was changed because this other race come in. Negroes had been living in our neighborhood. They were half the block and we were the other half. They lived their way and we lived our half down there, and the Jewish were on the other side of the street on Broadway. Now there is no Jewish hardly on the other side of the street and there's all Dominicans in with us Puerto Ricans, because they speak Spanish. And in with the Blacks too, the poor, poor Blacks too, the poor ones. But I don't know, the Dominicans are, I guess, I can't explain it really. [Pause] They're very, very different people. [Pause] They dress like hicks, they dress like hillbillies. They're hillbillies, sure, they can't speak; they speak Spanish, O.K., fine, properly. But they don't speak it with a high intelligence of Spanish. They don't, also they [pause], the girls, their parents don't care much about their children. The children are the ones you see out on the street late at night, still being up at eight, nine o'clock. They're out there in the streets till ooh! In the summer time, one or two in the morning! Aha, they don't really care. And their fathers and mothers out there playing cards or drinking or partying, whatever it is. I don't know. I can't say it's all of them, it's what I have seen as I go through, 'cause I ain't living there. I can't really give you facts. It's what, the opinion I got from just staying there a month, 'cause that's the longest I have stayed in New York since I've been in the Army, a month at a time.

7. Ronald R.
19 years
Río Piedras, Puerto Rico (S)

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Merlin, Connecticut. My parents are in Puerto Rico. It happened that my dad got married and I and my sister were born. But after about four years after I was born we then went to Puerto Rico.

Q: And why did you leave?

A: Because it happened that we didn't like the U.S. any more. I don't know, because I was very small.

Q: And your dad didn't tell you afterwards?

A: No, he didn't say why.

Q: Where in Puerto Rico did you grow up?

A: In Río Piedras.

Q: Which schools did you go to in Río Piedras?

A: I was one year in college, I went to Ribero public school up to the second grade. I was from the third grade to the seventh at a Protestant school. After that I went from the seventh to the ninth to the Free Music School and after that to Vilamayor, of which the saying goes [laugh], "To pronounce well the name of that school is to call up the Devil". It was a school of which is said, well, that you fight and stab. Because in reality it isn't so. All depends with whom you associate, and the people tell you "if you go there you will ruin yourself." I tell you without lying that in the same school there are more saints every year. It depends on the friends you have, everything depends on your friends.

Q: You didn't like school?

A: I had great friends. Now there are always some, who go bad, always one who looks for trouble. Distant friends that I know do but I don't hang around with them.

Q: Did you learn English in these schools?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know it well?

A: Well, as it is not practiced you can't. They teach it to us, but because we don't like it we talk Spanish. Because we don't like it. Everybody said, "Ah, this English isn't worth it." I myself didn't profit from what they taught me, which I'm lacking now. Afterwards things happen that you don't realize. Mistakes and all that.

Q: What kind of friends did you have?

A: I always had friends from all classes, but when I saw that something was bad for me, then I didn't follow, you know. I still know them, I can't reject them as friends, you understand. He's my friend because if he does something I say, "He thinks his way, I think my way." I always think of what I want, what is good for me.

Q: What was your dad's occupation?

A: In the United States he worked in a plastic factory or something like that. When he came over there he went to, he bought a business, liquor and all that.

Q: Did he have a shop?

A: A buffet bar.

Q: Did he live well from that or did he have difficulties?

A: All fine up to here but then he started to drink and what it caused was the divorce, you know, he came with problems.

Q: When did the divorce happen?

A: The divorce, it was about six years ago.

Q: And was it difficult for you to live through this?

A: Oh no, my ma was mainly the one who suffered.

Q: Do you feel much closer to your ma than to your dad?

A: Yes, that's it, because she is very womanly and she needs me more.

Q: And after the divorce did your dad leave to live with another woman or how was it?

A: No, he lived with his ma.

Q: Your ma didn't remarry?

A: No.

Q: How many children are in the family?

A: My sister who got married and me.

Q: Didn't you suffer a lot from these difficulties?

A: I, at the beginning I did, because he came home and has drunk, and. He fought with my ma, you know, and -

Q: With you also?

A: No, because in the beginning I was afraid because I, you know, you assume at the beginning that you bawl because he is right, but you don't see this and that, but then what follows, he didn't respect me and I also didn't respect him. Well, and my ma has to be respected also. If he is about to try to beat her and all that, then I have to step in, because she is my, mine, my ma, no to that. He did not respect me.

Q: Do you now drink alcohol or don't you?

A: Well, if there is a little party or something, well... To be happy and all that I drink, but a little glass, I won't get drunk. When I was in high school they give a party every Friday and I get drunk. When I drink a little beer or two there I feel happy, I walk away most happily.

Q: Did you have North American friends during the time you were in Puerto Rico?

A: At home there were Americans. They were really great.

Q: But they are different from the Puerto Ricans?

A: I don't know.

Q: What do you think about Americans in general? I'm saying they're not all the same. There are some that, I'm saying it already, there is a lot of racism. It happens that they say things, if a person is white or Black that will make me prejudiced. I bet that I won't take it. If he is white or Black or Indian, whatever, I don't care. Because I don't agree with this thing, that if you are Black "get away here", if you're white "get out of the way." I don't.

Q: Do you feel that American society is racist?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you feel that Puerto Rican society is racist?

A: No, it doesn't seem so. Because there everybody has to look for work. That I should have more privileges because I'm darker than this one or whiter than this one, no. No.

Q: Can a Black get married easily to a white girl?

A: I think so.

Q: If your sister would marry a Black would that bother you?

A: I, if they love each other and everything is fine, well, it's permitted. Now, if he is a person who is not suitable for her, well -. If he is suitable, you know, if he's a person who will support her, well, who will love her, who will help her, well, what would it matter! If he is a person who will try to, you know, cause her harm or something, I'm quite against it.

Q: And if your sister would marry a Protestant North American with blue eyes, blond hair; that wouldn't bother you either?

A: No, it couldn't bother me. /Pause/ Because the thing for me is, love, that he love her, that he treat her well, that he won't mistreat her.

Q: Which member of your family influenced you in your way of life and in your opinions?

A: My girl friend and my ma.

Q: What do you like in your girl friend?

A: She always, you know, for example, she don't smoke. My girl friend who is evangelical, well, she always recommends the same, she always tries to help me when I have problems. That is why I feel good, because you have someone to talk to.

Q: You say that she is evangelical. What does that mean exactly?
A: Well, she is of the evangelical religion.
Q: But what is the name of the religion?
A: She is Baptist. The church we go to is the "Defensora de la Fe" ("The Defense of Faith.")
Q: Do you feel that the Protestants are more serious people than Catholics?
A: Yes. Because they say that the evangelical people don't drink in general. They say they don't drink, they don't smoke. I'm not saying "always", because I have me as an example. I will, at least now, I drink from time to time. The majority don't drink. For example, the Catholic will, he drinks, it's true. But the evangelical no, he doesn't drink nor does he smoke.
Q: Your parents, were they already evangelical or how was it?
A: No. My dad is Catholic. My family is Catholic. And my ma is Baptist.
Q: She raised you in the Baptist faith. What about your dad?
A. Well, he goes with us.
Q: Did you meet your girl friend in the church?
A: Yes.
Q: Do you believe in a life after this life?
A: After death. [Laugh] I don't know if there is a life afterwards. [Laugh] You have to profit from this one. I don't, I don't know, this thing about the life afterwards.
Q: Do you believe that there is a Last Judgement?
A: According the Bible there is one. As a Christian, well, I believe in it.
Q: Do you believe that the Devil exists?
A: [Pause] For me, we ourselves are the Devil, because we are the ones who decide about the good and the bad. If we

are doing the bad, well, then we ourselves are the Devil. This is my opinion, it is not certain. Because nobody can force you to do something. If you want to do something you do it because you want it. If you give yourself to do that, well, then it isn't because of another person but already because of yourself. The bad is in ourselves, he who causes himself harm does the bad.

Q: Don't you think it is possible that the Devil can exist in human shape?

A: According to a book that a priest wrote whom they dismissed. He wrote a book, The Diabolical or I don't know. According to this book he does exist. He then comes out in human shape.

Q: Do you feel that it is possible or not?

A: It could be possible. I'm not certain.

Q: And what about the evil spirits?

A: If they exist I have never seen them. [Laugh] They never came out for me. It can be.

Q: Do you know anything about spiritualism?

A: No, no. My grandfather does. Once my ma and me and my grandfather went to a spiritualist session. And I, well, I have always liked these strange persons, I like to see as much as I can and to be there. Well, I know that they [i.e. the spirits] weren't friendly to me [laugh], because I was very small and I started to cry. But there were many people and they had their session there. The lady came over to call me, and these things, but I was a coward, I was so scared that we had to leave. [Laugh] And after this we never went back any more.

Q: Your grandfather was interested in these things?

A: My grandfather is still interested in it. He is still living.

Q: Is he still doing it?

A: I don't know if he goes or not, but he liked it.

Q: What are the major problems of Puerto Rico today?

A: Crime, robbery, a lot of vandalism.

Q: Why does this exist?

A: I don't know.

Q: What must be done against this?

A: Stop it. I don't know.

Q: Do you think that the police must be stronger than they are now?

A: In the police themselves, there are some who abuse what they can do in uniform. So then there are some who abuse and others who don't. This is bad.

Q: Do you feel that it is also the parents' fault?

A: Also. They don't take care and then they have many vices. They fight, the fights among husbands, and when they leave their children they don't take care of them. When the families are separated, then they don't know what to do, and they are small and the parents go away, and they have to stay in a sanatorium for orphans. This is a bad thing.

Q: What do you think of industrialization in Puerto Rico? Do you think that it is something good or bad?

A: It is good, but they destroy a lot of the countryside and all that: what is nature in the country. I think this is harmful in part, because it doesn't breathe, it is dirty, polluted. It is good up to a certain point, but. Also, you know, they put up a lot of petrochemical plants: this pollutes a lot of the air, and they exploit many fields, pretty parts of the country, where it's quiet.

Q: Do you like a lot the country?

A: Yes, I like it.

Q: Do you think that North American influence is very strong or maybe too strong in Puerto Rico?

A: No, no. I think that the United States are helping. [Pause] In part. In part they do harm.

Q: Don't you think that the U.S. are also profiting from Puerto Rico?

A: It's for this reason that I say that they are helping partly. Like, the things that Puerto Rico makes. Instead of staying here they have to pass through the U.S. and then are thrown back to us. What they take out, like this, this tax is called consumer's tax. With the fuel even that Puerto Rico makes, instead of leaving it there, but no. It gets to be more expensive.

Q: Do you feel that the island should be independent?

A: The independence of Puerto Rico would be nice, now they say that. For me Puerto Rico is fine as it is. Not independent nor a state but an "Associated Free State". When the U.S. gives us money, helps us, we are fine. For me it is fine like this. Independence would be nice, because every independent country is great.

Q: Why are you "independentista" then?

A: I am not "independentista". I am "Partido Popular". "Associated Free State". I am not "independentista".

Q: What do you think of the "independentistas"?

A: It's a way of thinking.

Q: Are they criminals?

A: No. Because this, this is their way of thinking and this is their opinion and I have to respect it. This is their personal opinion.

Q: Are you an admirer of Muños Marín?

A: I don't know much about Muñoz Marín. They say that he did a lot for Puerto Rico.

Q: And Albízu Campos, do you know this name?

A: I know it. But as to his biography - but what was he? He was in prison because of independence, this was it.

Q: Do you believe in violence in order to obtain independence of Puerto Rico?

A: In violence. Well. [Pause] We will never reach it this way, because it is a minority. They are very few. The people does not want to be of the state, they are not. The people, the majority are the ones to decide.

Q: If you had great power, absolute power, to change things in Puerto Rico, what are the things that you would change?

A: What I would change.

Q: What appears badly done to you?

A: Badly done, badly done, badly done. I don't know.

Q: What would you like to change?

A: I don't know. Not so many factories. I don't know what to tell you.

Q: You would like to limit industrialization?

A: Reduce it a little, but putting more people into agriculture. This, Puerto Ricans have always been in agriculture and now, with industry coming in, well, they are going away from it.

Q: Is there anything else that bothers you?

A: Which bothers me. The thefts. That nobody can live in peace because of it.

Q: Have you gotten acquainted with the U.S. since your childhood?

A: I passed through Fort Jackson and New York to go there.

Q: How much time did you spend in New York?

A: About half an hour. I changed from one plane to the other.

Q: Is anyone from your family in New York?

A: I have an uncle of mine who left Puerto Rico.

Q: Does he come back to Puerto Rico from time to time? What does he think of New York?

A: Yes, he comes back. He likes it in New York.

Q: He lives well?

A: Yes.

Q: What do you think about this emigration of Puerto Ricans to New York? Do you feel that it's a good thing or not? Do you prefer that they stay in the country?

A: I don't know. I don't know, because the reason why they move; some need work, some out of necessity.

Q: Jobs are lacking in Puerto Rico.

A: Jobs are lacking, and all that.

Q: Have you heard that there are Puerto Ricans who live very poorly in New York?

A: Yes, I have heard that.

Q: Why do you think they live poorly?

A: I know that, ah, they don't look for work. They want to live of - I don't know how to say it -

Q: Welfare?

A: Yes. It is their own fault, because I'm saying that it is a country that is not their own. Well, this supposes that if they are of the same family they have to think of them. Because, as they say, those are their sons and the future.

Q: What would you like to change in the U.S. if you had the power?

A: Racism.

Q: Why do you think racism exists?

A: The Blacks are progressing, the Blacks are those who excel now very much, for example in the Olympic Games. I think that this is it. As they never had anything, now they have more freedom. Before they were nothing but slaves. Now they have their freedom after the Civil War. I think it is because of that.

Q: But do you feel that there are people who profit from racism?

A: How who profit?

Q: Well, if a group wants another group to stay down, this first group profits from it.

A: /Quickly/ That's it, that's just it! This is why I said that as the Blacks were always at the bottom, now that they are moving upwards, well, exactly for this the whites don't want them, they watch closely, then they hate them, as they say, "Over here for whites" and "Over there for Blacks". And like that. That's bad.

Q: What do you want to do once you are out of the Army?

A: I'm thinking of studying computer science.

Q: Did you finish what corresponds to high school?

A: I finished high school and I was starting at the university. I was studying sociology, social sciences, but as I stayed there someone passed and I got interested in the Army. I was hoping, and I joined.

Q: Will you have the money to get married afterwards?

A: Well, I wish I had a steady job and all, that I had my money, and that I can build a house through the veterans' and all that.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: A good life. A good life is where there is no evil. I don't have vices and for me it's fine. I have my girl friend, I have my ma.

Q: Where do you want to live, in the city or in the country?

A: Well, I, for me it's the same. As in Río Piedras, there are certain parts, housing in the country, something like that, that is nice.

Q: You say that you don't have vices; that's fine, but what are your passions? What are the things that you like? What do you enjoy?

A: Enjoy - well, women. Sports, and all that. To go for a walk, to travel.

Q: Cars don't interest you?

A: Yes, yes, I got the fever for them.

Q: The beach?

A: Yes, anything that is sports I like. Car racing.

Q: Movies?

A: Movies. Everything. I like to travel and all that.

Q: Do you know the word "machismo"?

A: "Machismo". I have heard it, but it's true meaning I don't think I know.

Q: It comes from "macho".

A: Yes, it wants to say that you want to excel over the others, isn't it that? That a man wants to be more virile than he is.

Q: What do you expect from your future wife? What are the qualities that you ask from a woman?

A: As I said, she should love me, she should understand you.

Q: Should she be pretty?

A: O.K., pretty. But I'm saying that you shouldn't rely on that, but there are many who rely on that. That a girl is slim, they don't like that and all, but the good women are had because they are good, and all that. For her way to think and the way she is, her character, for that.

Q: Do you feel that it is important that she is a virgin?

A: Well, I'm saying to myself, as they say, there are few virgin women. /Laugh/ But this doesn't mean that she made a mistake and lost her virginity, and all that. But I'm saying that I won't stop loving her.

Q: If a girl is not a virgin is it still possible that you would marry her?

A: I'm saying that if I love her and she loves me, I'll get married.

Q: Do you want her to work outside the house once she is married?

A: If we need the money, why not?

Q: If you have children, what will you do?

A: Not if we have children. She should stay in the house.

Q: How many children do you want?

A: I'm saying as many as we can support, because it isn't worth it if we can't support them; then they get raised badly and can get ruined. Because if you don't keep them united they start out there, start taking drugs, no, it's bad. When they are small, they say that you shouldn't fight in front of them, things that can harm them afterwards, when they are older.

Q: Do you feel that a man should have sexual relations before getting married?

A: /Pause/ I don't know. If he wants to. It's all the same to me.

Q: Do you expect that your wife should be true to you and will you be true to her?

A: Yes. Because I, I think that one woman is enough. I'm not among those who say, "I got one here and I'm going to look for another." One should look for one, but if I have her I don't have to look for another.

Q: Do you believe in your dreams?

A: I don't know, but sometimes, I do at times. There are dreams when you get up and you don't remember, but things have happened to me, and I was at a place as if I had been there before. And I have heard there are dreams that, like, precede you. They say that this is certain. I believe it partly.

Q: Did you have experiences with drugs?

A: No.

Q: With none?

A: Never. It is something that I, as I have said, I was raised in the evangelical church and of my friends none smoke, none drink and the majority have no vices. And I, well, I don't want to break with the group, you know. If I leave or do something bad I'm out of the group. They won't reject me, I myself am separating myself from the group. No. And I think I must not do it. The majority who smoke they come and smoke to feel happy. Now, when they come to invite me, I tell them, "You smoke to feel happy, right, but I am a happy person who doesn't".

Q: Do you have a political ideal, a political leader who you like? I can tell you some names, Guevara, Castro, Kennedy, Nixon, the "Young Lords", King, Muñoz Marin.

A: For Puerto Rico: Muñoz Marin and for the U.S.: Kennedy.

Q: Have you heard of the "Young Lords" in New York?

A: I have heard of the group which was formed. I don't know details.

Q: Would you join a protest march of Puerto Ricans?

A: [Pause] I don't like marches. Even if they are organized by churches I don't like them. They invite me but I never go.

8. Miguel Angel R.
19 years
Bayamón, Puerto Rico (S)

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in M., Puerto Rico. This is a small town in the north of Puerto Rico, right in the center.

Q: Which bigger town is close to it?

A: Arecibo.

Q: When was your first visit to the U.S.?

A: When I was something like twelve months old. Later on I went there consecutively with my dad, at different times. For example, in '64, '65, '67, I don't remember exactly.

Q: Do your parents live in New York?

A: No, they live in Puerto Rico.

Q: What was your intention in going to the U.S., whom did you visit?

A: We have some nephews, uncles, brothers of my father, and, really, just to visit for some time.

Q: And did you go to school in the same small town?

A: No, I was only born in M., because my grandmother lived there and my dad and my ma thought they would find the atmosphere better for my birth, you know. But I lived in Bayamón, it's very close to San Juan. It's a town, it's quite bit, I think it's the second largest town in all of Puerto Rico.

Q: What do people live on?

A: There is a lot of industry, mainly. I have always lived with my family.

Q: What type of work did your father have?

A: My father is a lawyer.

Q: And did your mother work also?

A: Yes, she did, she is also a lawyer.

Q: And how many sisters and brothers do you have?

A: I have a sister from my father's first marriage and two other brothers from my father's second marriage.

Q: And you were born from the second marriage?

A: From the first. I am the adult, the oldest.

Q: Do you still see your real mother?

A: Yes, I see her. I'm living with her now. I change houses every now and then, yes.

Q: Does that cause you trouble?

A: Not at all. They live close to each other, in American blocks, as they say, "one block". It must be exactly two blocks. And I have a room to myself in one house and another in the other house. There are no problems.

Q: Do you mean to say there are no problems between the two families?

A: No, there are no problems.

Q: Up to which level of education did you get?

A: I was at the university and I had finished my first year when I decided to leave it, because I had many things in my head; I was thinking not to be in so many subjects. I was somewhat immature, in other other words. I can't sit down to study, above all I can't present myself at an exam. I'm thinking of studying in med school, of becoming a doctor. But, really, I don't know which field of medicine I want to go into.

Q: When did you learn English?

A: When I was in kindergarten. I was in more than three schools; I went to public, Protestant, private schools, all classes. And the government in Puerto Rico made it obligatory to learn English.

Q: Why did you change schools so often?

A: The way I explain it is because I'm a very nervous person. I must always be doing something, I can't keep still in any place, I can't sit still. I'm always moving. This is one of the reasons why I smoke.

Q: Which are the differences between a Puerto Rican and Nuyorican family?

A: As to the Nuyoricans, I really don't know much about them. My uncle, for example, is Nuyorican. Well, what happens is that they are real Puerto Ricans. They travel a lot to Puerto Rico and come back to New York. They come to Puerto Rico only to visit, but they come so regularly that it is very good. They have a complete knowledge of our culture and they keep it up in the U.S.

Q: Does this seem typical to you for the people in New York?

A: Well, this depends on the economic level that they are on. If they really have a hard time, if they can't find jobs, if, for example, the husband died or something happened, work in Puerto Rico is very difficult.

Q: Would you like to live in New York?

A: Well, it all depends. My girl friend is from New York and I feel at ease with her and I don't care if she is in New York or not. But I don't exactly like New York. It stinks. O.K., when I was smaller, when I was a child, I stayed with my aunt in Harlem, Black Harlem, and I went out on the streets and my aunt said, "Look, watch out for the Blacks, because they are vicious." She said "Blacks", but in Puerto Rico we have Blacks also. She would say, "This is true, but it isn't the same class of Blacks, they are different. Be careful with them, they can take away your money, they can attack you and beat you up." This was when I was small. I never had problems. Then I got older and what I don't like is exactly the Puerto Ricans. It seems that they are very prejudiced; this is not the case with the type of people we have in Puerto Rico. We have no prejudice, not like in the U.S.

Q: What do you think are some of the problems that Puerto Ricans are faced with in New York?

A: Problems? Racism is the first of them all. Racism that really -

Q: Racism against them or among each other?

A: Within and against. I mean, really, when a Puerto Rican goes for the first time to New York, well, which is, where he will meet so much racism. But they from time to time are confronted with this wall of negative thought, that the people say, "You are Puerto Rican, you are from over there", or, for example, my color, which is white, they say to me, "Well, O.K., you are white, come with us." Then I say, "I'm Puerto Rican." "Ah, go with the Blacks."

Q: Why do you think there is so much racism in New York? Are there reasons for that?

A: It isn't only New York, it's the U.S. The reasons for that are, they come from way back. They come from the Europeans that were in the U.S. and they /I.e. the Europeans/ started to construct their houses and looked for work, and if they don't speak the language well, then they said, "Look, you don't know how to talk, you are stupid, go away!"

Q: Do you feel that it is to a large extent economical?

A: /Pause/ Really, what I can tell you is, if you are rich and go to New York everybody treats you well. If you are poor and have to look for work that you sometimes can't get because you are a Puerto Rican. I don't know if this answers the question.

Q: What do you think is not right in the U.S.?

A: Many things. Well, some of them are, like, corruption in the government; everybody will say that, because it is certain. Ah, problems with the police. Well, for example, not only in New York, there are also in Puerto Rico, for example, sometimes they can punish a thief and they take him to prison and if nobody backs up the police, saying, "Look, I will testify against this person", the police gets angry, because people don't do it. Then the police has to be tough with people so that they confess what they did, because the citizens don't back up the police. Another one of the things that I don't like is how poorly informed Americans are about Puerto Ricans. They are so poorly informed that at times they ask me, "Where is that, in South America?" They ask me, "Listen, do they have cars there?" They ask me, "Listen, you are white, I thought that Puerto Ricans were Indians." Really, there is a lot that should be changed and it is not easy to think of them and think of a good solution. It takes time, but if today there is a way, let's suppose that I had the authority, God, if I were God, really, I would kill just about everybody. /Laugh/

Q: Who would that everybody be?

A: This just about everybody is, for example, let's start from the top government, governors, congressmen, the powerful, let's say the government that accepts money without us knowing that they really accept money, that are afraid that it will harm them in their own families. I would take these persons and would send them to another place for being cowards. And I would try, if I could, I would put all these people in prison, but it is impossible.

Q: What would you do with the big factories, with the owners?

A: If I could get hold of a person who is really honest, who could give you work not because of your religion, not because of your nationality, and not because of your language; if you could get hold of a person who could keep up and run a business well, then I believe that the factories and all the rest would go up, the economy would go up. People's lives would be better, because they would have more money to send their children to better schools, to get better houses and, really, these businesses don't go well with me. The factory doesn't function. There are many things that aren't right, people that have to work so much over-time to make a certain amount of money; and this isn't just, that they don't pay them exactly what is their due, and then start trials and fights and strikes.

Q: What do you think about the influence of the United States in Puerto Rico?

A: Well, right now there are two groups. One of them has a party, for example, a political party, which is in favor of the U.S., another which is against them and another who says, "Well, whatever." The influence that the Americans are bringing in is at the same time good and bad. Some people think it is good and other persons think it is bad.

Q: Which is the good side for you?

A: The good side is that we alone, without the U.S. helping with millions of dollars which bring all the factories to Puerto Rico, which bring all the industry and knowledge, we would be nothing. We could not have money, we could not have work, we would have to live only from agriculture and we don't have sufficient land for agriculture. Yes, the U.S. brings us money, work and progress; at the same time they bring so many tourists that are our, precisely, our number one income. And if it weren't for the U.S., socialism could some in. This was what happened in Cuba which has communism and nobody can be free and everybody wants to leave Cuba. And I don't want to see this in Puerto Rico.

Q: What do you think of the cultural influences of the English language, of American customs in Puerto Rico?

A: There aren't many customs that they can impose on Puerto Rico, really, because the customs are already made. They have to adapt themselves to what we have. If they don't like them they have to go. The same, if we go to the U.S. we have to take their ways.

Q: How much time did you spend in New York?

A: I can tell you precisely; I stay each year for two months. The last time I was there, I was like four months, I stayed in Queens.

Q: Do you like the big city?

A: I have always liked it, being active, having something in order to be active: dancing, working, whatever, but I always have to do something.

Q: The countryside isn't so important?

A: For visiting, for visiting.

Q: What would your reaction be if your sister got married to a white guy, blond, North American? Would it bother you, or how would it be?

A: It all depends what he is like. If I don't like him I tell him "good-bye". If I like him, he is welcome.

Q: What do you like in a guy?

A: He should be honest, true to his wife, he should treat his wife well, he should be loved totally by us, he should know how to win our confidence. It wouldn't bother me to whom she gets married. That's about it.

Q: And if he was Black, would it bother you?

A: Also, the same way. My dad wouldn't like it much.

Q: What are the qualities that you expect from your future wife? Does she have to be a virgin?

A: Oh, sometimes I think of this, sometimes I say, well, this doesn't really matter, but really I don't know what to say. I would have to get married three times with three different women, and I always say no. One thing of which I think is the fact that I'm very jealous and that she has to be very loyal, true to me; this is the first. To be a good mother.

Q: Are you loyal too?

A: /Pause/ Sometimes. /Laugh/

Q: Other qualities?

A: I have said that she should be a good mother, that she should know how to rear her children, how to teach them the good things, for example what I think is good, what I think is bad, what she thinks is good, what is bad. She shouldn't be prejudiced against anything, neither for social status nor for color. They should believe in God.

Q: Do you allow her to work outside the house?

A: It all depends. For example, I'm trying to have a good profession when I get out here. If it is necessary that she works, she should work, but all depends also what she is working. I don't want her to work in a factory.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: Well, since I like the city, right, I would really like to live near a beach where I can surf, swim or whatever; to have money, but I don't want to have money just to have money. I want to use it, enjoying the things I like, like wine, drinks, good things, good clothes for my children, with good food. This is, I think, a good life and a good wife who loves me and will have pretty children.

Q: What do you expect from your future children?

A: Of my children. That they too should have a good profession. That they should not have problems like other persons have had, because they have not had the chance to go to school.

Q: Is education important to you?

A: Yes, very much.

Q: If there is a difference of opinion between you and your wife, how are you going to handle it? Who will win?

A: I am the boss, that's all. We can really discuss it; it depends of the issue that we are discussing. It depends who knows more about what we are talking about, but above all I'm the one who decides things. I would not be a dictator, I would try to make it more a democracy.

Q: Have you heard the word "machismo"?

A: Yes, of course.

Q: And what does it mean?

A: Well, it has different meanings. Each day I hear a different one. And what it means for me is, for example, the Latin American, not only the Puerto Rican but the Mexican also, the South American, thinks that to be a man is the greatest thing in the world: strength, brutality, to be powerful, to be the greatest, the leader.

Q: Also to be the great lover?

A: Oh yes, this would have to be the first of all.

Q: Do you like this concept of "machismo"?

A: "Machismo" is for me, it sounds like insecurity of a person, a person who is not sure of himself, who is afraid being a man, out of fear that people may think that you could be a faggot or whatever.

Q: Which are the differences between an Anglo-Saxon and a Puerto Rican family?

A: We are more united. We can talk about problems with more love. For example, I still give a kiss to my father, to my mother, to my grandparents, my uncles, everybody; for us a kiss is to show love, tenderness.

Q: And the Anglo-Saxon family seems a bit cold to you?

A: Right, they sometimes seem very cold to me.

Q: We were talking a little while ago about making money. What do you think of the way North Americans make their money?

A: Sure. They do it in a way like any other person would try to, the best way how to make money, I mean. I don't blame them and maybe I would try to do the same.

Q: Does a life so much directed towards the dollar look fine to you?

A: It isn't really good, but in the life that we are living, in the world that we are living in, people look down at you, say, "You're not worth anything, your children would be suffering." You really need money in order to keep up your family and your children and without being bothered by anybody. Live your life, help whom you can, like I have tried to so far. Money is necessary.

Q: Is reputation, the opinion of others about you important for you?

A: It isn't really important for me, but - really, it is. It depends. I try to ignore anything that they want to bother me with. If it is sound criticism and if it can help me, I analyze it and try to do the best I can.

Q: What does the "Grito de Lares" mean?

A: "El Grito de Lares" means independence to me.

Q: Are you in favor of independence?

A: No.

Q: In no way?

A: In no way. I worked in a part of the government when our government was up in power. I worked as president of different districts for our party.

Q: Which one was it?

A: The party is the PNP, this means "New Progressive Party". It is in favor of the U.S., in other words.

Q: And what does it want to do?

A: What we want is to make Puerto Rico into a U.S. state. We will have more privileges and we will have to pay more money, but we won't have so much pressure like we have had so many times.

Q: Do you admire Muñoz Marín?

A: Yes and no. Muñoz Marín has done many good things for Puerto Rico. At first, he said that he was "independentista", but at last it turned out that he wasn't. He decided in a more intelligent way that being friends with the U.S. and at the same time a bit independent was wiser. But I don't think, what he did was good and I don't agree with them. I think it is better to be a U.S. state or be independent and not to be in the middle. And this is what he wanted, to be in the middle.

Q: And a federation of the Antillas doesn't look interesting to you?

A: This is an idea that I have never thought of before. But I don't think that the U.S. would like this much. I also think that the U.S. won't last eternally, something has to happen.

Q: What?

A: A war, for example.

Q: Do you feel that the present power of the U.S. will drop one day?

A: Everything that rises has to fall.

Q: And Albizu Campos?

A: Well, independent also. He has to do with the "Grito de Lares". I don't know much about him. I never tried to get interested in him. He is adored by the "independentistas".

Q: Are there many?

A: There aren't very many; the majority are half in favor of the Commonwealth that's the party they have now. The second majority being PNP are in favor of statehood, and the minority, a really small minority, are the "independentistas".

Q: Are they intellectuals or are they simple people? Who is "independentista" in Puerto Rico?

A: Well, they are trying to copy the "Young Lords", making the propaganda in the form of art. They are really so beautiful that at times I have difficulties detesting them. I'm saying: detesting them.

Q: Are they educated people?

A: Not all of them. Albizu Campos was very intelligent and he was very well educated, but that doesn't mean that all "independentistas" are, and the majority of them are disturbed. I can't tell it exactly, but it is my opinion about them.

Q: What do you say if somebody asked you who are you?

A: Puerto Rican.

Q: You are not American?

A: American by nationality because they gave it to me when I was born. I am Puerto Rican by blood, by heart by everything.

Q: And statehood wouldn't change you?

A: No, it wouldn't change me. Culture, language and the love for Puerto Rico go on prevailing.

Q: What are the most serious problems in the big cities?

A: Well, San Juan has sometimes problems with the police, but I really think that in the last ten years they got much better.

Q: What kind of problems?

A: With what they call like police brutality, things that aren't necessary, illegal procedures.

Q: Do you feel that there is no racism in Puerto Rico?

A: Not in the sense of color and nationality; between Puerto Ricans there may be really racism against some Americans in the way they have progressed; these are mostly "independentistas". Then against the Cubans; the Cubans lost their mother country, now they had to make another country their home. They were in Puerto Rico, because we have the same language, we are brother islands. They work harder than any Puerto Rican, because they know what they lost and they want to have it again. So some Puerto Ricans are jealous of the Cubans' progress.

Q: Do you think that the island of Puerto Rico can have two cultures, a North American and a Spanish one?

A: I think that it would be very difficult. It is good to have the language, it is very good to know two languages. It is very good to know something about different cultures. But I think that the culture of Puerto Rico will always prevail in Puerto Rico. I don't think that the two of them would function at the same time. The language is something different.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: Of course.

Q: Do you believe in the Saints?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Do you believe that they help you directly?

A: Not really. I believe in God Almighty, and I'm really Catholic and it is expected to believe in the Saints. But at times I'm saying that I'm not Catholic and don't believe in the Saints. And I believe in the Saints most of the time.

Q: Do you believe then in a life after death?

A: In a better life than the one we're having, yes.

Q: Which type of life would it be for you?

A: I think, complete happiness, perhaps we would keep the dislikes that we're having now. I don't really know, I'm confused, I don't know. The only thing I can have is faith.

Q: Do you believe in evil spirits?

A: I can't really tell. I'm open for any problem that is given to me.

Q: Don't you fear an evil person or a spirit?

A: There are people who are extremely evil, but I don't know if it is because of a spirit. I don't have problems of any kind. I have never thought that it's an evil spirit that is in me. But I think that there really are evil spirits.

Q: Do you believe in the power of "curanderos"?

A: I believe in the power of priests, not in "curanderos". "Curanderos" don't mean anything to me.

Q: Do you feel that the church uses its power well?

A: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. I depends on the situation and on the question.

Q: For example.

A: For example, when it says that a woman can't use contraceptives, and that she has to use the period rhythm in order not to have children. I think this is completely stupid and I think that it is impossible if there are many problems with money. They are against operations, they are against abortion. I think that these things don't solve the problems and that they have to be solved in some form. And I think that the pill isn't bad.

Q: Do you think that a man should have intimate relations with women before he gets married?

A: All depends on the women and your situation. For me love doesn't mean that I have to get married to her. Love is love. It only comes from your heart, from your mind, and I love and I can have intimate relations and I don't necessarily have to get married because I have intimate relations.

Q: What is your opinion of your dad and what was the situation of your dad in his life?

A: It begins when he was a child, they were twelve brothers, twelve. And my grandfather was a farmer, he worked mostly in tobacco, he planted tobacco; he didn't have a car, he didn't have anything. At that time there wasn't much; you had to be rich at any rate to have a car.

Q: What age is your father now?

A: He now is something like forty-eight years old. But my grandfather worked a lot to get food for them. My father and all my uncles had to go to a public school. My father was the only one who could be a professional; he was the only one who worked so much. I have uncles who had to join the Army because of this all the time; they had to spend time in the

Army to better their lives a little. Others were bad, they weren't too good. But he started to go to school without shoes, he had to start to study for himself, still being a child, he had to go find work himself. Then, when he got a little older he had to join the National Guard. He was about sixteen and the National Guard furnished him with clothes, shoes, food, and money, because during all this time he got the best grades at school. He reached high school, he graduated with high honors, went to the university, graduated with honors and all this really because of the help of the American government, because of the National Guard. Before joining the Army he was in the ROTC. He finished at the university because of the American government. Because they paid for him, he became an officer. He stayed six years in the service, left a captain, went back to it again and continues studying and left Law School also with success. During all this time he rose by himself, through his own work.

9. Angel Rafael V.
20 years
Bayamón, Puerto Rico (S)

Q: Did you live in Bayamón all your life?

A: I was partly in this town and partly with my ma in Guayama in the south for about three or four years, and after that I returned with my dad north to Bayamón, Rio Piedras, San Juan, Santurce.

Q: Why did you change places so often?

A: Well, my parents got divorced when I was a child,and so I spent some time with one and some time with the other.

Q: Were you disturbed by this divorce as a child?

A: I think that this divorce had some influence on me,but I was in favor of it.

Q: Why?

A: There were a lot of fights. And my dad drank. He got married again and got a divorce, and married another time and again got a divorce. My ma worked to feed me.

Q: How many children are there?

A: There are four, three girls and me, the only boy.

Q: And all the children stayed with the mother?

A: Yes. Afterwards, at the university, one apartment here, another apartment there.

Q: Are your sisters married yet?

A: Only one, the first one.

Q: And she is happy?

A: Thank God, yes.

Q: Do you see your dad now and then?

A: Yes. He doesn't drink that much now.

Q: Why is it that your dad drank so much?

A: Well, he liked a lot a bachelor's life and above all he liked to gamble, to have great parties with his friends. He liked girls and a lot of girl friends. I don't think it's a good thing that he is married, you know, because he is too free. He likes to do what he wants, even if he is concerned about the house he remains himself, you know.

Q: Which type of work did he have?

A: He has a furniture factory, furniture and things like that.

Q: And your mother?

A: Before the divorce, ma did not work, after she had remarried she worked in laboratories in petrochemistry. Ma has only gotten up to high school, you know, then she worked for two or three years taking kids to school, to kindergarten. She remarried, her husband has a high position in the factory. Then she took a course for a year or so in a laboratory and stayed with that work.

Q: Did you ever go to the U.S.?

A: I went twice for a week. This was when I was five. I don't know much about the U.S. I was in New York, with relatives. They were relatives on my mother's side, not too close ones.

Q: What was your impression of New York?

A: It's different. It's really different. I'd say it's fine for vacations, but I wouldn't like to live there. It is too noisy, a lot of people together.

Q: Do you feel that the Puerto Ricans have a good life there?

A: I have no experience with that.

Q: Did you learn English in school?

A: I learned a little in school, but I wasn't interested.

Q: You finished high school?

A: Yes.

Q: What would you like to do after you get out of the Army?

A: Go to college again. I like programming computers.

Q: Do you feel that the American influence on the island is a good one?

A: Quite good. Industry and the money come from outside, the big factories. The danger that could exist would come from the "independentistas". If there were too many Americans there would be competition between Puerto Ricans and Americans. I don't think there is now.

Q: What do you think of the "independentistas"?

A: [Pause] I am partly on their side, partly not. As they say, it's our Puerto Rico and we want Puerto Rico first for the Puerto Ricans and then for Americans, for tourism. Tourism is one thing and that they stay in Puerto Rico is another.

Q: For which party do you vote?

A: The "Populares" because it has the most ideas. It has people from both points of view, you know.

Q: What are the most urgent problems in today's Puerto Rico?

A: Above all work. There is a lot of work but I'm referring to big construction jobs, like hospitals. There is a lack in those.

Q: Do you know the "Grito de Lares"?

A: I forgot it, but I've read it.

Q: Do you know the name Luis Muños Marin?

A: This one, yes. He is the symbol of the "People's Democratic Party" for which I vote and I think sincerely that it was him who led Puerto Rico upwards.

Q: And Albizu Campos?

A: I'm not sure, he was for independence, wasn't he?

Q: Do you think that the independence movement is growing or not?

A: Yes, right now it is growing, but it won't be sufficient for the next fifteen, twenty years.

Q: Do you prefer the status of Puerto Rico as it is now or would you rather see it as an American state or as an entirely free island?

A: No. I prefer it as it is now, yes, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Q: Are you Puerto Rican or American?

A: Puerto Rican and nothing else.

Q: What is your culture?

A: Latin American.

Q: What do you think of the Americans?

A: [Pause] Well. The Americans have a great superiority as far as industry is concerned but in friendship and human warmth they have nothing to offer for me. Also this thing with Blacks on one side and whites on the other; they have divisions between them. This seems a bad state of affairs, that's clear.

Q: Do you find them polite?

A: [Laugh] Come on, come on! They lack education, not in knowledge but in manners. It's the same for whites and Blacks, they are the same.

Q: Do you feel yourself superior in that matter?

A: I don't feel superior to anyone but I believe I have a great deal of manners that they don't have. This gives me an advantage over them.

Q: What would you say if one of your sisters got married to a blond, blue eyed, Protestant American?

A: How nice, really! It doesn't bother me that she gets married to an American if she likes him.

Q: Do you know what "La Raza" means?

A: No.

Q: What does "machismo" signify?

A: It refers to certain women who have activities like men, like many girls who do men's sports, always have their hair short, things like these. They want to compete with the men and do without the menfolk.

Q: Which member of your family influenced you most?

A: My ma. She was the one who set the example for me, I'd say. The example as to the good and the bad things, and this has always stayed with me, you know.

Q: What are the qualities that you expect from your wife? Is it important that she is a virgin?

A: It is important, yes. I would like her to be a virgin, you know. There could be the case that I would marry a divorcee, but I would like to meet a single woman.

Q: And you yourself will remain a virgin, too, until your marriage?

A: /Laugh/ Come on!

Q: What are the other qualities that you expect from your wife?

A: That she be a good mother, that she know quite well how to keep a house, that she has concern for me and my children.

Q: Would you like her to work outside the house?

A: No, no. If I am able to pay for the house, well, there is no necessity for her to work. She should be a mother.

Q: If there are discussions in the house about some matter, who is the boss who decides?

A: Both of us.

Q: But who decides finally?

A: Me, me. /Laugh/

Q: What do you expect from your children and what do you give them?

A: Essentially an education, studies, school, college. An education both at home and then also as regards knowledge, respect for the father.

Q: What does a good life mean to you?

A: I don't expect much from life, you know. I'm not a person who has too many ambitions. What I want is what I need, a house, a car, be able to go out when we want to. To be rich or something like that doesn't mean much to me. I want to live comfortably.

Q: And what about your work?

A: My kind of work is hard but that does not last long.

Q: Do you prefer to live in a town or in the country?

A: In the city, for example in the city where I grew up. It is already part of my atmosphere. I like the movies, discoteques, parties, the beach, a good car, a good road to race on. I'm not a man of the country. I like it for vacationing but not to live there.

Q: You ask your wife to be true to you, will you be true to her?

A: [Pause] The word "true" includes a lot of things. I'll try to be rather true. I believe sincerely that I am a faithful person.

Q: When did you have your first girl?

A: I was something like fifteen years old.

Q: What kind of girl was she?

A: Older than me, she was about twenty.

Q: Did you like it?

A: Of course.

Q: Was she the instigator or you?

A: She talked, I think. We went out together for a year and a half. She was already in college, in the first year of college.

Q: So when she finds a husband she won't be a virgin any more, will she?

A: Of course not. I don't think she was a virgin before either.

Q: The idea that she might have problems to get married doesn't bother you?

A: No, in no way.

Q: What do you think of Puerto Rican society; do you think it is also a racist society?

A: No. Not to the extreme as in the U.S. There is a little of it, that's clear.

Q: Against whom?

A: Against persons of color.

Q: Also against Cubans?

A: No. For us, Cubans, the people from Santo Domingo, from all these islands next to Puerto Rico are as if they were part of Puerto Rico, you know. Especially with this problem of Fidel Castro in Cuba. I have many Cuban friends, I trust many of them more than many Puerto Ricans.

Q: In which form does prejudice against the Blacks show itself?

A: We don't have the problems like the U.S. as regards Blacks on one side and whites on the other. We grow up together. you know. But there is always this influence in one's house, ah, especially the girls. My mother wouldn't like it if one of her girls got married to a Black, you know. And things like that.

Q: Are you of Spanish background?

A: Spanish. My ma, my mother's dad and my mother's grandmother are Spanish. Then my dad and my dad's dad are a hundred per cent Puerto Ricans.

Q: What would you change in Puerto Rico if you had the power?

A: /Pause/ The government is O.K. At the university, there were many problems: things between the "independentistas" and Communists who try to, who have something on their mind, something about Puerto Rican independence. I would be a little tougher with them than the government. I would try to keep them more on the side of things, you know.

Q: With which methods?

A: Well, in the worst case, we could throw them out of Puerto Rico or something like that, influential persons like the one you mentioned. This, I refer to Albizu Campos when he was at the highest point in his career, he didn't work alone, he had many people who worked with him.

Q: And you feel that the "independentistas" are Communists or what?

A: Yes, the problem with the "independentistas" in Puerto Rico is that it has many young people that have the idea that the American is the "gringo", the foreigner. They don't know much about politics and so remain with the movement for independence. But you can pick, say, twenty "independentistas" and they really don't know much more about politics and things like that.

Q: Does an island with two cultures seem possible or desirable to you?

A: Yes, it seems fine to me.

Q: Don't you think there is a danger of losing your Latin culture that way?

A: No, because it is a good thing that English is taught in Puerto Rico; this is for the good of the Puerto Ricans, because many of them have to leave Puerto Rico to find good jobs and all of them have to be bilingual. If they don't speak English and Spanish, their chances aren't good that they will find good jobs.

Q: Are you saving money now?

A: Yes, a bit. I would like to buy me a good car first, to drive to college with.

Q: Did you have any experience with hash or marihuana or anything similar?

A: Yes, when I came in the Army. Never before. I like it. People who don't know much about smoking or other drugs, the first thing they think is that it will be addicting, you know. And this problem doesn't exist with smoking. I'd like to say that many of my friends smoke. I see them when I'm looking for it and buy it there when there is a chance that they smoke, you know. When the group is smoking and I arrive, well, I can't leave them with just one leaf, you know. I smoke and then I leave, and that's it. You feel high, you feel different, yes. It is as if you were drunk, you know. But it doesn't affect the stomach nor do you get a headache: none of those things.

Q: Can you do it during the day, during work, or do you have to smoke at nighttime?

A: No, I can do it during daytime.

Q: Do you believe in your dreams?

A: Yes. I think I do. And well, my family believes in spiritualism. Yes. And my mother has always dreams and explains them afterwards. Mamá always told me, "God may be with you, and be careful with this and that." And afterwards we often talked problems over and things like that.

Q: Your dad doesn't believe in spiritualism?

A: No.

Q: And you, do you believe in the spirits?

A: Yes.

Q: For instance.

A: Yes, not in the spirits in me, but I was at sessions with many people, with people who are called mediums. And there are many people possessed with spirits and things like that.

Q: What happens at a session?

A: First people assemble round the table, usually they have white gloves, and there is a bowl or a cup of water on the table and usually two candles. And the lights are put out and the session starts with prayers. The oldest medium who has most experience and who is able to be possessed by the spirit in the quickest way, leads the session. They are Christians. Ah, as I said, usually there are two or three mediums at the table, you know, the others are like helpers who see to it that nothing bad happens to the persons, and things like that. They don't have to be exactly women or men. And the lady who leads the session - I say lady because the one I have seen sits at a corner of the table - and they join hands as they pray, and they start to pray. Sometimes it can be quick, you know, like, in five minutes that she is possessed by a spirit or something, another time half an hour can go by, as she says, if there is no influence in the room, you know. But at times it can be quick, five minutes. Then they start to pray and ask different types of prayers from Our Lord until one of the mediums is possessed by a spirit, you know. Ah, they say that we all have a helping spirit, a guardian angel and therefore these mediums have always two or three spirits around them. Now, as they have spirits to help them with things like these, they take candles, a little glass of water, things like these. Then at the same time the spirit passes, well, you will see the person how he or she trembles, how it is difficult, you know. If one doesn't have much experience, well, it can even be fatal, you fall down a floor or you get a stroke, but if the lady has experience she can do it easily, you know. Then she trembles and then she says things with her hands and as her body shakes. First I was present when she talked another language which we didn't understand, like Indian or Egyptian, things like these which one doesn't understand. But the other medium stays at the table as they help the lady, you know, and try to talk to her. The spirit talks Spanish, talks English, talks what language it wants, you know, if it knows, because not all spirits know all the languages. Like, this lady had a spirit which was Indian and talked the Indian language. Now when it talks Spanish it talks a Spanish, how do you say it, strange, you know, different. They cut words and leave out letters in the middle so that you don't understand much. Often it uses bad language /laugh/ like the spirit that had my mom, who had somebody who was fighting, which wanted to disturb the work, and things like that. And Ma told me that no, there was no proof nor anything, then she said there was, that there was this and that and starts to talk and didn't believe me. And this girl was one of my friends. Then the spirit told her [_i.e._ my mother] what the girl's room was like and that in its closet there could be a little table with candles. It says that it had black candles with white sperms on the outside and that the spirit had brought them. Then when the white sperms withdraw the black candle stayed and this keeps the spirit back, you know. Then Ma didn't believe it until one day she, you know how women are, out of curiosity, well, Ma entered the room and opened the closet and there was a little table with candles and things like that. Well, then Ma was very much afraid, you know, and said good-bye immediately and left.

Then another time I was at the table and the spirit told her that it was always watching over me, that it kept always watching over me and that my Ma was a good mother for me. And it told her things about her husband, you know. It said that it always keeps watching over Ma and that it cuts the curtains. Then Ma laughed, you know. Ma said that this is not possible. It said that it was always cutting the curtains in my room. Then Ma said that I don't have curtains in my room; then the assistant was very much afraid and ran through the room. He had been sleeping in the room. He runs through the room, ran, all pale, - what a thing - in his shorts, through the room we were in, you know. He told Ma that he had seen something like a light, a transitory thing, like fog or something that passes in front of your forehead and that had come out from the closet. Then he said that he was taking it easy and woke up, and when he woke up he could neither talk nor do anything and when he tried to move he couldn't do it. Then, when he couldn't move, then he left, ran to the center of the room, then to the hall we were in and when he saw himself in briefs, you know, then he tried to walk backwards, but he couldn't walk backwards. Then the spirit said, asking him where he had come from. Then he was scared, you know; then Ma said, "You told me that you tried to cut the curtains", and then it said it did, but that the curtains were in the closet. The door has some very small short, like, transparent curtains, you know. Then it said, "You saw that; I don't tell lies, I will cut curtains", and things like these. I remember quite well.

Q: Up to which age did you accompany your ma to these sessions?

A: Up to fifteen, sixteen years.

Q: Were you also a medium?

A: Sure, yes. At first I didn't believe, you know. And I said, this can't be true. But then, there are many people who also said that they didn't believe. The spirit said that this was bad. It doesn't matter if they laughed. You can't laugh, you can't laugh, or bad things will happen to you. The spirit can bother you or possess you and cause that you run your head against the wall, that you fall, or whatever.

Q: Is your mother still doing all this?

A: She is ill. And now she is in the hospitals. They give her aspirins and things for her head. The doctors say that they don't know what she has. At times, she is fine, you know, two or three months she is fine, and then after another day it hurts and things like that. And I remember that many times the people who laughed and demanded proofs from the spirit, you know, it takes possession of other persons, you know, and these do things, ridiculous things, you know, like meow like a cat or burn their hand with a candle, you know. Then the spirit says, "You don't believe in me, well, I take possession of you and burn you", you know. And you won't burn yourself, you know, you can put your hand in the fire and you burn underneath, and things like these.

Q: Was there a person who dominated the whole table?

A: In general the medium, the one who had most experience, who knows most.

Q: Was it always at the same house?

A: No.

Q: Was it never in your house?

A: It took place there once or twice. I don't like it to take place in our house, no.

Q: How was this thing about the closet? Was there a closet in every house or just in yours?

A: Well, in my house. When my Ma said, "But in my room there are no curtains", you know, then she took the curtains out, and when the spirit took possession of my stepfather, you know, and didn't let him move himself nor speak or anything, it was a question of knowing that something had happened to him, something like a proof. Then he had to leave through the room and as he saw himself in his briefs in front of so many women and all that. He didn't like it, you know, Ma took him home and he fell asleep afterwards.

Q: Do you believe that the Devil can exist in human shape?

A: I believe that he could appear, but it is difficult to imagine that the Devil takes possession of a person. There are always evil spirits and things alike that do the work for him.

Q: What other experiences or superstitious beliefs can you tell us about?

A: I do not believe in superstitions, quite sincerely. The number thirteen, the cat that crosses the street, in these matters I don't believe. And I didn't believe in spiritualism either until I saw myself, you know. When I had this experience at home, you know, you get scared, you know, and I left home and came back after some time.

Q: For how long were you away?

A: For four months.

Q: And your mother understood that -

A: No, Ma didn't, no. I also told her that I'd change school and that I'd go with my dad, you know. I remember another thing. This was when I was a boy. I was sleeping and I wanted to steal a cigarette from my dad and smoke it. But Ma always told me not to smoke, but then something told me to smoke. Then I stole the cigarette and I took it to the room. But I remembered that Ma told me, "Don't smoke!", you know. And I didn't want to smoke but something said, "Smoke, smoke." And I said, "No, no." But it said, "Smoke, smoke", until I took the cigarette, I took it automatically, you know. Then I smoked twice or three times, but I didn't want to smoke, but it was obliging me until I said now I don't smoke anything, you know, "I don't smoke", and I threw it away. I threw the cigarette away and hid in the bed for about twenty minutes. Then the smoke started to appear and my mattress was burning. Then my mother came and put it out, and then I told it to Ma. And Ma took me to the medium, you know. Then the ladies arranged a session and Ma told them what had happened. Then the ladies gave me a "despojo" /I.e. a ceremony to rid me of the spirit7, that's what they do, things like these. The medium has the power to extract the spirit from you and take it. But this is dangerous, because it's a risk to take it from you and throw it on yourself, you know. Then the spirit took possession of the medium, you know, it took possession of her. She had to laugh for five minutes straight, the spirit in her, and it laughed, a hysterical laugh, you know, you laugh and you can't laugh nor talk, you weep, and things like these. Then it started to talk between laughs and told me, "I told you so. I told you so," and continued laughing. "I told you that you would smoke, that you would smoke, and you want to smoke because you obey my words." Then the other medium that was present asked, why it was asleep, if he was a good boy, and these things. Then she said that it had tried to take possession of Ma but that Ma could not. Then it took possession of me so that I would turn against Ma, that I wouldn't heed her words, you know, and things like these; and as it couldn't take possession of Ma,it took possession of me. And it made me burn the mattress, so that I wouldn't play anymore with it, you know. As I didn't want to smoke, it burnt my blanket, you know, like I was ordered to do so. Oh boy! Afterwards, the lady who had the spirit went on laughing, laughing until the other mediums dominated her in order to help her, you know, and they told her to throw the spirit into a bowl of water. And so, so they rid me of the spirit, in this way. Afterwards they pour it out; they have large bowls, you know. Then many persons keep the bowls for a day and then pour it out,or something like that. I don't know what they do with the bowl. And this is what happened.

10. Herman B.
"La Allianza"
Boston, Mass. (E)

Q: Mr. B., what are the areas that your agency is dealing with?

A: Social service, housing, employment, and education.

Q: Mainly adult education?

A: Yes, mainly adult education, although we do some education for youngsters.

Q: How many Spanish speaking people are in Boston today?

A: Well, it's hard to say, approximately sixty thousand.

Q: Do all come with legitimate entries?

A: There are cases where they come illegally.

Q: Which class comes from Puerto Rico usually, is it the poor?

A: Mainly the poor, yes.

Q: Do they know English when they come?

A: The great majority doesn't.

Q: Do they have immense problems finding work here without knowing English?

A: Yes, they do, yes

Q: Do you have evening classes then?

A: Yes, we do have evening classes: English as a second language.

Q: Do people come regularly or do you have problems with attendance?

A: Well, the attendance in the evening classes is very consistent.

Q: Do you feel that Puerto Ricans especially are discriminated against by authorities in Boston?

A: The Spanish as a whole are discriminated against in Boston.

Q: Why?

A: Yes, by the mere fact that they are Spanish speaking. In some cases because of the fact that they don't speak the language: they are foreigners.

Q: Are there other schools, regular elementary or high schools where teachers teach in two languages?

A: Just recently the Department of Education has passed and has established some bilingual classes and programs which in a way are beneficial to the youngsters coming from Latin America with no knowledge of the English language. On the other hand, that does delay the speed with which a youngster may be able to learn the English language.

Q: Who funds your "Allianza"?

A: We receive funds from different sources: state, federal and private.

Q: How many employees do you have?

A: At the present time twenty-seven full-time employees. In the last year or so the mayors have been given a lot more power. Federal funding comes through this channel, through the mayors, and the mayors are using these funds for their own political ends.

Q: The same here in Boston?

A: Sure, all of them, especially here. Now this is an election year and, you know, he's spending the money where the vote is, and he knows where the potential vote is gonna go.

Q: Do you see yourself and the Puerto Rican group as rivals with the Black community or are there coalitions?

A: Well, let me put it this way: at the present time the government is just throwing crumbs, O.K., and Spanish speaking groups, the Black community, and other minority groups are fighting for those little crumbs. And then there is always that fear that one group is going to take away the little that comes to the city or to our communities.

Q: Do the Puerto Ricans live in a "barrio", close together, or do they live spread out all over the area?

A: Yes, yes, Puerto Ricans tend to live grouped together.

Q: Which section would that be in Boston?

A: Well, the Spanish speaking community, since Puerto Ricans are the great majority. They spread all over now, but the greatest concentration is in Roxbury, the North Dorchester area, Jamaica Plain, a part of Mattapan and, of course, the South End.

Q: Do people who come here and see you complain about direct discrimination: that they're looked down upon?

A: Oh, yeah, it's obvious, sure.

Q: Could you describe a typical example of how a Puerto Rican is made to feel that he is second class?

A: O.K. When a job is available and a Puerto Rican applies for that position, whether it be in a factory or in an office, no matter how qualified that Puerto Rican is, O.K., if an American applies for this position even with less qualifications, the American will get it.

Q: What explanation is given to the Puerto Rican?

A: Often times when they prefer someone for a job the explanation is: "No longer available", or that the person doesn't speak enough English or, they have an excuse anyway.

Q: How stable is the Puerto Rican family here on the mainland under these pressures?

A: Well, not too stable.

Q: Who leaves, the man or the woman? Who stays at home with the kids?

A: In our culture, part of our culture the man is the bread winner, right. Until very recently, a few years ago, you never saw a woman working and, of course, especially those Puerto Ricans that came directly from the island. In that culture, you know, the man is the bread winner.

Q: Who in the family is more unstable? Is it the man who seeks other women or is it the lady of the house who gets frustrated with all these problems that they can't face?

A: Well, when I said "instability" I meant not living in one place too long, they move on, trying to seek work, better housing, living conditions, better education opportunities for their kids.

Q: Are they aware of how important education is?

A: They are. They have been aware of the importance of educating the kids, but I think they have become recently more and more aware, you know.

Q: Is your agency sometimes viewed as, if not subversive, at least socialist by city administration?

A: Well, the city and the state are not too receptive to making people aware of what their rights are. And, of course, when they say that an agency, you know, is advocating progress and opening of opportunities, they don't like it.

Q: Do you have any classes here in civil rights or in legal advice?

A: We have some seminars on civil rights and some information for the community: what their rights, their civil rights are.

Q: Do you know how many of the children complete high school?

A: The percentage is quite low.

Q: Is it usually the first generation living here in Boston or is it already the second generation?

A: I think both.

Q: Do Cubans who on the average were middle-class before they fled Cuba collaborate with you? Do they give you financial support?

A: No.

Q: Is there a private enterprise or a foundation that could do something?

Q: Yes, but unfortunately it doesn't do anything. Well, this is the land of the Kennedys. Unfortunately, the Kennedys are only concerned with their own group. They haven't done anything for Boston.

Q: What are your most urgent problems as an administrator of this agency?

A: Well, if you set priorities, the first priority would be employment: not only placement but training. In order to place a person in a position other than a factory you have to have some training, you have to have some skills. Two: housing. In order to get good housing, a good living quarter, you have to have moneys, so that's why I put employment first. Three: education.

Q: Do Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. have problems with identity? Is it true that they sort of live between two worlds, that they don't know where they belong?

A: Yes, the second generation. O.K., a child comes from Puerto Rico, let's say in the early stages of their lives, they come to the mainland. Often times they are not accepted. Although we are American citizens we are not accepted into the American society. Sometimes the color of the skin is a problem. Let's say a family has eight, nine kids. With one of the kids the color might be dark; the other one might be light. In the schools, in the school system, one might be identified as white and the other one as Black. And not only is one more accepted than the other, but among the family there is that continued crisis, "Am I Black, am I white, am I Puerto Rican, or an American?" Especially those that don't speak their own native language very well and have some problems talking English. So, you know, it's hard.

Q: Do parents come to you with this kind of situation?

A: Yes, they often come to the agency and explain the situation.

Q: What do you advise them?

A: Well, one of the things is that often times we try to get those kids to realize how important it is, you know, to be aware of their own culture. We have a culture as Puerto Ricans. We have our own culture, our own identity, O.K.? Sometimes those kids tend to be frustrated, feel inferior not knowing their own identity, you know. So that's one of the things we try to do.

Q: Are the majority who come over from rural areas?

A: Yes, from the rural areas. The adjustment, right, they have to adjust to a larger city, to more problems, to racism. No matter how qualified a person might be, he might be the last one to be hired and the first one to be fired. The Spanish speaking community, and the Puerto Rican community, we are not only discriminated against by whites, but also by the Blacks.

Q: What are the reasons for discrimination by Blacks?

A: Well, again, they are fearful that whatever little money is in the pot, right, the Puerto Rican community is going to take it away from them. It's also a question of power. Of course they are much more organized politically. They have a much bigger political clout than the Spanish speaking community; however, they still feel threatened.

Q: Is there something like a Puerto Rican political movement here?

A: Puerto Ricans have not as yet organized themselves in terms of political power. We are beginning to realize the importance of becoming politically oriented, but we haven't achieved that much.

Q: Have you in your career ever had anything to do with the N.A.A.C.P., and do you think that a collaboration is possible or not?

A: Well, first of all they are two different cultures even though some of the needs are similar. However, they grew differently in terms of customs, cultures, admitted needs. For example, they didn't have the language barrier - we do. Although they haven't reached their potential in terms of politics, they are much more organized than we are. They probably cannot see the problems as we see them.

Q: Is your agency the only one in town, or is there something similar or a branch?

A: Let me put it this way. About five years ago there were about six or seven Spanish speaking agencies. At the present time only three remain. This is the only multi-service center agency in the Boston area and, I think, in the whole Commonwealth of Massachussetts.

Q: Do you have enough influence and possibilities to place people in jobs? Do you have businesses who give you a certain percentage of their free jobs?

A: /Laugh/ Not really. Not really, and I may give to you an example of typical discrimination. A couple of weeks ago I was called by an individual who notified me of some job openings. At that particular time I was told that they prefer Cubans, O.K.? Just to, you know, verify what they would do, we sent them about five Puerto Ricans. They got there, talked to the person they were told to talk to and were told that no jobs were available.

Q: And there is nothing you can do?

A: You can go to the Civil Rights Commission of Discrimination but I don't know if that - you know; I'm sick and tired of going to all those places and getting nowhere.

Q: So what's left for you to do?

A: Nothing.

Q: Do you have any contacts with universities: education departments, social science departments?

A: I had some contacts with universities and colleges, and we have a person whose duty is to go out and visit universities: see what's available for minorities, especially Spanish speaking people, and to see what innovative programs are established. Of course, it takes a lot of energies, efforts, and I don't know what success we will have in terms of changing the establishment. The establishment is a big monster.

Q: I also understand that the School Board here is openly racist. Is that correct?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: You mentioned a school or two where Spanish was taught also. Which schools are they?

A: O.K., there are three schools where they have bilingual programs. One of them is the Rafael Hernåndez school. Rafael Hernåndez was created as a result of the effort from community people back in 1969 when there was no bilingual program for Spanish speaking kids. They come to the city or to the mainland with very little knowledge, if any, of English. They were placed in a room where the classes were totally in English, you know. They didn't know what was being discussed and often times these kids, although they might have been brilliant in their own native country, when they came to the mainland not knowing the language they were placed in retarded classes. There were also some problems with kids being harrassed in public school. So therefore, the community decided to get together and do something about it: make some efforts, even picketing and finally, after a few months, about a year, we were able to get the school committee to approve the concept of bilingual education.

Q: Would you like for Puerto Ricans, even for those who live here permanently, to maintain their Puerto Rican culture and identity?

A: It is very, very important to maintain our own culture and identity.

Q: Even if they live a generation or longer here?

A: If they live two or three generations here, or even if

Puerto Rico becomes a state I think that we should maintain our own culture and identity. And I don't see that as impossible.

Q: What are the activities that go on at the Allianza?

A: In terms of education we have English as a second language, and that's for people who want to learn English, the basic English.

Q: How many times a week is that?

A: Five days a week: Monday through Friday evenings from six until eight o'clock. Also Spanish as a second language, for Americans who want to learn Spanish and better understand and deal with Spanish speaking people.

Q: How many people come to that course?

A: Not too many, not too many. English as a second language, courses are about twenty-five to thirty people; Spanish as a second language sometimes you have five, three.

Q: What is the total number of Spanish speaking people who enroll in that English course?

A: About fifty.

Q: What other services do you offer?

A: Well, social service.

Q: Could you explain a little about that?

A: Sure, social service, we deal primarily with people that are having problems with their work, advocating for those people, trying to get the welfare assistant aware of the needs of the Spanish speaking people, and trying to make them more responsive to those needs.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: O.K., if a person, often times a mother with five or six kids on welfare, needs a better living quarter. As you may know, what those people get is very, very little, O.K., perhaps 200 dollars, 250 dollars twice a month, out of which they have to pay rent, food, and medicines, right? Also, often times we deliver checks. We take those people to the welfare office to find out what happened. Taking people to clinics, hospitals, trying to advocate for better services for the Spanish speaking community, trying to get those institutions to hire bilingual teachers to teach classes in their own native language.

Q: Is there a drug problem in the Spanish speaking community?

A: Yes, and it's growing, it's growing rapidly.

Q: Hard drugs?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Who are the users, the younger or the older generation?

A: Both, but mainly the young generation.

Q: Who are the dealers and the pushers?

A: Anglos and often times people with high positions in the government.

Q: Are they too high to be condemned?

A: They are too high to be condemned. Yes.

Q: Why do you think the problem is growing?

A: Out of frustration, especially for those who have no identity, who have no place to turn to, who have family problems, no jobs, whose living conditions are deplorable, so they have no choice but to turn to drugs.

Q: How is the crime rate?

A: High. It is high. Boston has that unfortunate distinction. Last year we had a higher crime rate.

Q: What are the predominant crimes?

A: Robbery, murder, and also sexual assault, rape.

Q: Has your agency any influence on these matters, on the drug scene?

A: Very little.

Q: Is there a drug squad in town?

A: Yes, it's very, very inefficient. What happens, not only do drug pushers sell the drugs in the streets, on the sidewalks. When the police officers, the patrols, pass by in the

cars a lot of times they just turn the face.
Q: A subject that we haven't touched upon is religion. I have read that there are quite a few Protestant sects that appeal to Puerto Ricans. Is that true and it is also true that they are stabilizing them?
A: Yes. There are a lot of Protestant sects that Puerto Ricans mainly are affiliated to. Pentacostal faith is growing rapidly.
Q: Why do you think they turn to the Pentacostals?
A: O.K., two reasons, mainly. They have found that the Pentacostals practice the Bible much more strictly than the other sects. When you go to prison, when you find a Pentacostal in prison, it's rare and there must be a reason for it. It tends to stabilize the family, the home, much more so than the others.